

# THE ARGOSY.

FEBRUARY, 1892.

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ASHLEY.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE BUTTERFLY CHASE.

NEW YEAR'S-DAY, frosty, bright and cold : just the day for a sharp walk on the hard country roads, giving a healthy glow to the blood and to the face, very agreeable in midwinter. A gentleman, who was winding up a slight ascent in a picturesque part of England, appeared to find it so. He marched along with a hearty step, aided by a right good will and a stout stick. His face was browned, as by foreign travel ; he was no longer young, and he stopped, almost incessantly, to note various points in the landscape, with a curiosity which seemed to say the locality was strange to him.

Not entirely strange, but it was thirty years since he had witnessed it. Presently, as he came to two roads, he halted in indecision : and no wonder, for one of them had been made recently. "Can you tell me, sir," he inquired of another passenger, who now overtook him, "which of these two roads will take me to Ashley?"

"To the house or to the village?"

"The house. Sir Harry's."

"This one to the left. I am going there myself." He was a little, spare man, rising forty, with a red, good-humoured face. An ample blue cloak covered his person, nearly to the feet, which were clad in dress-boots, black and shining. As they walked on together, a carriage came bowling along behind them. Its inmates appeared to be richly attired.

"That makes the fourth carriage which has passed me this afternoon," cried the bronzed stranger. "Are they bound for Ashley, do you know?"

"To be sure," returned the little man. "To-day is a grand day with Sir Harry Ashley. The christening of his son and heir."

"Why, what do you mean?" uttered the other. "I thought Sir Harry and his wife were childless."

"They were until—let me see—just three months ago. On the 1st of last October, I introduced their son into the world."

"You!" exclaimed the stranger, halting and gazing at his companion. "You cannot be Josiah Gay?"

"I am Josiah Gay's son. My father has been dead these twelve years. And I stand in his place, the village Esculapius."

"Then you must be young Jos!"

"No, poor Jos is gone also. I am Ned. But you have the advantage of me."

"I suppose so. A residence in a hot climate plays old Harry with one's looks. And, otherwise, you would not remember me, for you were an urchin in pinafores when I left. Your brother might, were he alive. He and I and Harry Ashley—reckless Hal!—have had many a spree together; robbed more orchards, and done more midnight damage, than I should care to tell of, now. To think of Hal Ashley, the third son, coming into the title before he was 'six-and-twenty.'"

"Perhaps you are Philip Hayne? Mr. Hayne."

"Major Hayne, at your service," returned the other, raising his hat, and disclosing a head nearly bald. "Thirty years have I served the East India Company, and only got my majority to retire upon. Well, well; we should be thankful for small mercies in this life; and I have neither chick nor child."

"Wish I could say the same," cried Mr. Gay, drawing his good-humoured face into a comical expression. "I count ten, and there may be ten more behind 'em, for ought I know."

"All of us to our tastes," returned the Major. "If I had half the number I should run away the first wet morning. Another carriage! two! They are coming thick and threefold. By the way, though, what has Lady Ashley been about, to keep Sir Harry out of an heir twenty or thirty years, and then give him one at last?"

"Twenty or thirty years! Oh, I see; you are thinking of the late Lady Ashley. Sir Harry lost his first wife four or five years ago. This is his second."

"Whew!"

"Last autumn three years he married this one. She was a girl of twenty, his ward, too young for him. And he may thank luck, more than anything else, that he has an heir at all."

"Ah?"

"She is of wilful temper, violent to a degree. Three several times have there been hopes of a child, and the expectations have always been destroyed from some imprudent conduct on my lady's part. Once, it was through a fit of raging passion. When she ought to sit still, she will go galloping out on horseback, for a day at a stretch; and when told that exercise is necessary to her, she will not take it, but lounge on a sofa from week's end to week's end. However, the child is born."

"Whose nose does it put out of joint? Somebody's, of course."

"Have you forgotten Ryle Ashley? Sir Harry's next brother."

"Not I. I never forget anybody, or anything: man, child, horse, dog."

"Ryle Ashley's gone: died the same year as poor Jos. His eldest son, Arthur, was then the heir. Sir Harry brought him up at Ashley to all the expectation."

"And this young shaver cuts him out! Very annoying to him, no doubt, but there are worse misfortunes at sea. Had I a score of boys, I would rather see them carve out their own fortunes than inherit one ready made. What sort of a genus is Arthur? Has his wits about him?"

"Clever and keen as was Ryle, his father. And he had the brains of the family. Arthur Ashley will rise in the political world, if he minds what he is about. There is a talk of his going into the House for some close borough. He has been secretary to one of the ministers these three years."

"Better for him than waiting for Ashley. I should like to see him."

"He arrived here to-day at mid-day: I saw him as he passed through the village. He is come to stand to the new heir. Lady Pope is outrageous, I hear, that they have not asked her to be god-mother. But she and Lady Ashley do not hit it off together. She has been but once at Ashley since Sir Henry's second marriage, and left in a rage at the end of the third day: some breeze between her and the new lady."

"Who is Lady Pope?"

"Sir Harry's sister. Formerly Bessy Ashley. A widow now."

"What! did she marry? Why, she was nearly an old maid when I left."

"She married twice. A Captain Rivers the first time, Sir Ralph Pope the second. Here we are! The house is not changed. By-the-way, though, Major Hayne, how came you here on foot? Where from?"

"The railway station. Stopton. I hate your close frys, and your omnibuses, and I have not learned idleness abroad—as too many do. I purpose going over the Continent on foot, when I have said How-d'ye-do to what old friends I can muster in England. Rather an unseasonable moment to break in upon Sir Henry: but he will not mind that, if he is what plain Hal Ashley used to be."

Not a whit altered in heart and hospitality, only in years. He grasped Major Hayne's hands with a delight he did not attempt to hide; and when the latter put forth his travelling attire, as a plea for not attending the august ceremonies of the day, Sir Harry laughed at the idea of so frivolous an excuse. He linked his friend's arm within his, and proudly paraded him before his assembled guests in the saloon. "The old friend of my early years," he said to them;

"the closest friend I ever could boast of. Lairetta," Sir Harry continued, as they halted before a young, dark, handsome lady, "this is Major Hayne, the companion of my youth."

"A fine woman," whispered the Major. "Who is she?"

The Baronet smiled. "Your coming has turned my head," he replied; "it was an introduction all on one side. I should have said, My wife, Lady Ashley."

And now, the circuit of the room passed, the Major drew aside. Sir Harry went forward to receive other guests, and the stranger made good use of his eyes. It was his custom. He was regarding a gentleman who had just come in, and whose appearance particularly attracted his attention. A young, elegant-looking man, with a large proportion of intellect stamped on his well-shaped head and expansive brow. But, as Major Hayne looked, he suddenly, in the fair complexion, the grey eye, and the handsome features, detected a resemblance to the Ashley family.

"Ryle's son! It must be! the disappointed heir! I'll go and speak to the lad."

He did so, laying his hand upon the young man's shoulder. "Unless I am much mistaken, you are your father's son."

Arthur Ashley wheeled round. But there was a quaintness in the stranger's smile, an affectionate regard in his eye, which won his favour. Where could he have sprung from, this brown, travel-soiled man, with his unsuitable attire?

"I am the son of Ryle Ashley," Arthur said.

"And Ryle Ashley was the partner in my boyish scrapes. Not so entirely as your Uncle Hal: but we have had many a wild frolic together. I was ringleader, for Ryle was a year or two my junior. So he, poor fellow, is gone, I find, and I am left, well and hearty. Should it ever be your fate, Ryle, to try your luck under a smoking sun, adhere strictly to temperance and simplicity of living. That is the secret which has scared away ailments from me"

"I am not Ryle, sir, I am Arthur Ashley."

"Ay, yes. I knew it. But your face is what your father's was, when I went away, and I dreamt I was talking to Ryle again."

"I think you must be Captain Hayne," said Arthur, who had been ransacking his memory.

"With another step in rank tacked on to it. The captain has subsided into major. But, as we are on the subject of rank, how do you bear the loss of yours?"

"I have lost none."

"The anticipation. You were Sir Harry's heir."

"Why, do you know," returned Arthur, becoming animated and speaking in a confidential tone, "I am glad of it now. With Ashley in prospective, there is too much fear that I should have frittered away my days; have led a life of indolence, as Sir Harry does. With the necessity for exertion, came the exertion; and the love of it.



I would not exchange my present life—and I can assure you it is no sinecure—for the renewed heirship of Ashley."

"You'll do—Ryle the second," cried Major Hayne.

The christening was over, and they sat around the banquet-table. A goodly group. Lady Ashley, in her young beauty, at its head, Sir Henry, with his fifty years, at its foot. Nabob Call and Arthur Ashley, the child's godfathers, sat on Lady Ashley's either hand; the Nabob a surly old East Indian, peppery in his temper as his favourite diet, capsicums and cayenne. It had been a marvel to the gossips that Arthur Ashley, a younger branch of the family, and a man without county influence, should have been fixed upon to stand to the child, when so many, far above him in position, would have been proud to render the service to their old friend Sir Henry Ashley. Lady Ashley chose the sponsors. How little did they think, who sat around her that day, and marked the ready smiles on her face, the courteous attention to her guests, the witty repartee which ever and anon rose to her lips—how little did they think, that hatred and revenge towards one of those sponsors was the ruling thought of her life! She had once loved Arthur Ashley, Sir Harry's presumptive heir, with all the passion of a warm and ill-regulated heart. When she arrived from India, the self-willed Lauretta Carnagie, they had been thrown much together: Mr. Ashley paid her more attention than he ought to have done—perhaps strove to gain her love, who knows?—and when he had gained it, whether intentionally or not, she discovered that he was playing with her, for he was the promised husband of another. Not from *love* did she then hasten to become Sir Harry Ashley's wife, but that Arthur might be bowled out of the succession. Three years, and her hopes had come to naught—three years of feverish impatience: but now her revenge was gratified, *her* child was the heir to Ashley. And when Sir Harry had thanked her for naming his nephew (whom he had not thought of) as one of the heir's sponsors, she broke into a harsh, wild laugh: but she did not tell her husband that it was with the view of giving pain and mortification to Mr. Ashley that she had brought him to be present at the christening of the child who was his supplanter.

With the dessert, the infant was brought in. The nurse made the circuit of the table with him. He lay in her arms, asleep, a bundle of embroidery, whose face might have been composed of lace and white ribbon, for all else that could be seen of it.

The gentlemen charged the glasses to the brim, and the company rose. "Long life to Carnagie Call, the heir to Ashley!" Not one drank it more heartily than he who stood at Lady Ashley's left hand, the supplanted inheritor. There lingered, in truth, no regret on his mind, and that revengeful lady little knew Arthur Ashley.

"*What* did they name the child?" whispered Major Hayne to his next-door neighbour, a lively young lady of thirty, when the applause was over.

"Carnegie Call."

"Carnegie Call! Is that English or Dutch?"

Lady Maria laughed. "Perhaps it is Hindustanee. She was a Miss Carnegie, of Madras, and Nabob Call has passed his life there. The child is named after them."

Somewhat later, the nurse was sitting before the nursery fire, undressing the infant, when the door softly opened and Lady Maria Kerrison came in. "How d'y'e do, Eliza?" she said. "I have come to see this prodigy of a child." It may be explained that the nurse had been children's-maid to Lady Maria's young half-sisters, and the Countess of Kerrison (the earl's second wife) wishing to part with her, had strongly recommended her to Lady Ashley. The servant rose and placed a chair for Lady Maria, if she chose to sit, but she stood looking at the child.

A miserable little infant, as brown as a berry, long, half-starved arms and legs, a scowl on its dark brow, and a whining cry that was rarely still. It was whining piteously now.

"Eliza!" uttered the young lady in the surprise of the moment, "what a frightful child! It is a perfect scarecrow."

"I call it quite an object," replied the nurse. "What with its lanky limbs and thin body, it looks all legs and wings."

"It is like its mother, though," said Lady Maria, attentively regarding the face.

"An ugly likeness, my lady. It will never have her good looks. But there's one thing it is like her in," added the servant, dropping her voice, as if fearful the walls should hear, "and that's in temper."

"Will it live, do you think, Eliza?"

"I should say not. Though sometimes these skeletons of children fill out and ——"

Eliza ceased speaking, for who should sail into the room but Lady Ashley, Mrs. Call, and the Countess of Kerrison, the child's godmother.

"A beautiful infant!" rapturously cried Mrs. Call, who had a great aversion to children, and had never yet been able to distinguish one from another. "You ought to be proud of your charge, nurse?"

"I am, ma'am. It is a perfect love, as I often tell my lady. And got its mamma's eyes."

"Nana says I was like it when I was a child," broke in Lady Ashley to Mrs. Call. "Do you think I was?"

"Very much so," promptly replied Mrs. Call, not, however, having the slightest recollection on the subject.

The whole of this time the child was moaning its piteous moan, and the visitors turned to leave the room. The Countess of Kerrison lingered for a moment.

"Does it get enough to eat, Eliza? I never saw so thin a child."

"It eats enough for two, my lady."

"And the more it eats, the thinner it becomes," interposed Lady Maria. "Eliza says it's all bones and feathers."

"Bones and feathers!" echoed Lady Kerrison. "*Feathers!*"

"Oh, Lady Maria!" uttered the servant, "I never said so. I said all legs and wings."

"Legs and wings, that was it!" laughed Lady Maria. "I knew it was something that made me think of birds. Good night, Eliza. I wish you more luck with the young gentleman."

Arthur Ashley stood in the drawing room, his cup of coffee in his hand, talking to Lady Maria Kerrison. His uncle came up and drew him apart.

"I have had no time to ask you anything, Arthur. You should have managed to get here before to-day."

"I could not. Lady Pope ——"

"I know, I know," hastily interrupted Sir Harry, as if there were something in the subject he wished to avoid. "Has anything been decided about your marriage? Anna will be tired of waiting."

Arthur Ashley was about to answer, when he perceived that Lady Ashley was standing close to him on the other side, listening. "I have other things to think of," he shortly said, and moved forward to take Lady Maria Kerrison's cup.

But the following morning, when they were alone, he himself introduced the subject to his uncle. "I have been thinking—and Anna—that if all goes well till the end of summer, we shall try our luck together. What with one source and another, I make out seven or eight hundred a year, and it is of no use waiting. Anna is willing to risk it."

"Enough to begin upon," said Sir Harry; "more than I and my wife had, before Ashley unexpectedly dropped in. But why could you not have told me of this last night, when I asked you about it."

"One does not like to speak of such things in a crowded drawing-room," was Arthur Ashley's evasive reply. How could he tell his uncle that a feeling of delicacy towards *her*, who, he had reason to believe, had once passionately loved him, prevented his speaking of his own marriage in her presence—although she had long been the wife of another.

Sir Henry Ashley sat one morning alone. It was nearly mid-day, but his wife, adhering to the idle habits of her Eastern childhood, rarely rose till late. Four years had passed since the christening of the heir—and he was the heir still. A sickly, unhappy-looking little wight, as brown and thin as ever, but possessing a most precocious mind. As the clock struck twelve, Lady Ashley entered with her two children, Carnagie, and his fair and lovely little sister, Blanche. The little ones were dressed to go out.

"This is quite a spring day, so warm for March," observed Lady Ashley. "I am going to send the children down to Linden, and let them dine there."

"Oh," screamed out young Carnagie, "I like Linden. I can make as much noise as I like there."

"Make the most of it to-day, then, my boy," cried Sir Henry. "It will be about your last chance. They must take their farewell of Linden," he added to his wife; "I have received a letter from Arthur this morning."

"What have Arthur Ashley's letters to do with our children?" demanded Lady Ashley, in no pleasant tone.

"A great deal, so far as Linden goes. Arthur and his wife are coming to live at it themselves."

Lady Ashley's eyes flashed fire. "Coming to live at Linden!" she exclaimed. "And will you permit it?"

"I have no authority in the matter," returned Sir Harry Ashley. "Linden belongs to Arthur."

"I don't care who it belongs to," was the intemperate rejoinder of his lady. "Linden has always been ours, to use for the benefit of our children, and it shall remain so still."

Sir Harry began to whistle: rather a favourite amusement of his. He never would quarrel with his wife, and it was his great resource when she spoke in terms of provocation—as she frequently did.

"How dare Arthur Ashley interfere with our arrangements?" she began again.

"My dear, do be reasonable," urged Sir Harry: "you know the circumstances as well as I do. Linden was a pretty, unpretending little place in my father's time, as it is now, jutting upon the edge of the park, and when its proprietor offered it for sale, my father was too glad to buy it. Of course we all thought he intended it to go with the estate, but he left it to Lady Pope, who was not married then. I believe Sir Arthur made her give a sort of promise that it should not eventually be separated from Ashley. However, she has willed it to Arthur, and there's an end of it."

"Linden was ours," fiercely retorted Lady Ashley. "Who says it was your sister's?"

"Why, Lauretta, you knew it was hers! you must have heard so fifty times. I only rented it from her."

"I did not hear it, I did not know it. What have I to do with the details of the estate?"

"Well," coldly returned Sir Harry, "when Lady Pope died, last November, I informed you of the contents of her will, upon my return from the funeral, and that Linden was bequeathed to Arthur. I am sure I thought you would be delighted to hear that Arthur and Mrs. Ashley were coming to Linden. I went there this morning, after breakfast, to see about some alterations he wants made, and it was running in my head, all the way there and back what an agreeable companion Anna would be for you. I cannot say, though, but I am surprised at Arthur's fixing on Linden as a residence. In the first place, the house is small; in the second, I don't well see

how he will get on with his parliamentary matters, so far away from town."

Lady Ashley did not immediately answer. This place, Linden, had been used by Sir Henry, for many years, as the dairy-farm, and Lady Ashley had been in the frequent habit of sending her two children, with their attendants, to the house for the whole day. She imagined that the change and the exercise were of benefit to Carnegie; and, besides, the noise of children at home waged perpetual war with her nerves.

"If you do not stop Arthur Ashley's coming, you have no love for your own children," she resumed, in a voice of concentrated passion. Her husband laughed.

"Lauretta, don't be childish. Arthur has announced his determination to reside at Linden, and it is not possible for me to interfere, even by a hint. Our children will do as well without Linden as with it. And they can go there sometimes: Arthur's young ones will be rare playmates for them."

"My children shall never mix with Arthur Ashley's," she retorted, with a pale, determined lip.

"Never mix with Arthur Ashley's!" repeated Sir Henry in astonishment. "What do you mean, Lauretta?"

"Never. For I hate him, and all who belong to him."

Sir Henry put on his hat, with a sigh, and went out: he saw she was going into one of her unmanageable humours. Poor Sir Harry Ashley! He had found his sister's temper, when she ruled at Ashley, inimical to his comfort, but he had scarcely changed for the better, in that respect, when he made Lauretta Carnegie his wife.

Not until July did Mr. and Mrs. Ashley arrive at Linden. It took some months to put the place in order for them, and Arthur could not leave town sooner. He wrote M.P. to his name now, and was the right hand, under the rose, of Lord Swaytherealm, the greatest man in the Lower House. Sir Harry was there to welcome them, but not Lady Ashley. On the following Sunday afternoon, however, the two families met together, near the secluded cottage of Watson the gamekeeper. Watson's mother, an old woman of five-and-seventy, was sunning herself outside, on the bench, when Mr. and Mrs. Ashley and their eldest child came up. Mrs. Ashley, a very affable young woman, but just now in delicate health, sat down by her side, glad of the rest. Almost at the same moment, Sir Henry Ashley, his wife, and Master Carnegie also appeared in view.

"Do you remember me, Hannah?" inquired Mrs. Ashley.

Of course not, at first, for old Hannah was getting dim of sight, and had not seen her for several years.

"You remember me?" interposed Arthur.

"Remember you, Master Arthur!" reiterated old Hannah; "I must forget myself before I forget you."

"Well—this lady is my wife. And you know I married Anna Rivers. She was a favourite of yours, in days gone by."

The old woman's face lighted up with intelligence, and, when the bustle occasioned by the greeting of Sir Henry and Lady Ashley had subsided, she beckoned forward the little boy by Mrs. Ashley's side.

"What do they ca' ye, my bonny bairn?" she inquired.

He was a gentle child of three years, with the fair curls and bright Saxon features of the Ashley race. When he was made to comprehend the question—for though it was fifty years since old Hannah came to Ashley, she had never entirely abandoned her Scotch tongue—he answered timidly.

"Ryle Ashley."

"Then tak' care o' yoursel', my bairn : tak' gude care o' him, Miss Anna," she added, looking at Mrs. Ashley, "for as sure as ye all stan' round me, he'll be one day the Chief o' Ashley."

"You are mistaking the children," interrupted Lady Ashley, in a cold, proud tone, as she pushed forward Carnagie towards Hannah. "This is Sir Harry's son, the heir to Ashley."

"Nae, nae, my leddy," she answered, laying her hand with a fond, pitying gesture upon little Carnagie's straight black hair, "he's no born to be the inheritor of Ashley. Have ye nae heard the tradition, that there's only three names that can inherit Ashley? Arthur, Henry and Ryle; each name in its ain proper turn, and nae to supersede the other: have ye nae heard it? Sir Harry kens well that it has always been so. Sir Harry, why did you nae name your son Ryle?"

Shades of anger, perplexity and deep, deep paleness, passed over Lady Ashley's dark face. Sir Harry had proposed that name for his son; urged it; but she, in her strong self-will, had insisted on calling the child Carnagie. "Ryle was the name of my favourite brother, Arthur's father," he had said. The more reason had persisted Lady Ashley, for its not being given to *her* child.

Sir Harry laughed now, jokingly at old Hannah. "We have come to days of enlightenment, Hannah," he said, "and have done with ghosts and traditions. Sir Carnagie Ashley will do for the nineteenth century."

Hannah shook her head. "Ye ken weel, Sir Harry, that once, when ye were a random lad o' nineteen, ye fell into an unlucky scrape. Nothing but money would get ye out of it, and that ye had nae got, and ye did nae dare to tell your father, Sir Arthur. I could nae help ye, but I told ye to keep a good heart, for that you would surely come some time to be the laird o' Ashley. I told ye that Henry came next to Arthur in the succession, and Ryle after that, and then it went back to Arthur again. You laughed at me; for ye had two brothers older than you were, fine, healthy youths, and likely to live. But in a few years ye found that I had told ye truth. You should ha' named your boy Ryle."



"We will name the next so," was the baronet's good-humoured reply.

"Ye may never have another. But I think ye are mocking at me, Sir Harry, as ye did in your young days. What did I tell you, Mr. Arthur, amaisht half a score year ago?" she continued, turning to Mr. Ashley. "It was the day ye sheltered in here from the thunder-storm ye mind, when ye were wearing the mourning fresh for your father. Ye were saying ye would do this to the estate, and ye would do that, when it was yours. Do ye mind, now, what I said to ye?"

"To be sure!" cried Arthur, humouring the old lady. "You told me not to count upon Ashley, for that to succeed Sir Harry I should have been named Ryle, and that if no Ryle arose to succeed him, the title would lapse."

"I thought it would lapse," she went on. "When Mr. Ryle, your father, died in Sir Harry's lifetime, I thought nothing else but that it would lapse with Sir Harry. But now there's another Ryle arisen in your son. Is that why ye named him so, Mr. Arthur?"

"No!" almost fiercely interrupted Arthur. "I named him Ryle in remembrance of my father. I truly hope Sir Harry's own children may succeed him."

"My bairn," said the old woman, taking little Ryle's hand in hers, who had stood quietly at her knee, looking into her wrinkled face with his clear blue eyes, "when ye are a great man and are called Sir Ryle, perhaps ye may have a little boy of your ain. Mind what I say to ye, *name him Arthur*, and dinna forget it. If ye are alive still, Miss Anna—and it is to be hoped ye will be for many a year after that—see that it is done."

"I think you are fanciful," said Mrs. Ashley to the old lady, in a good-natured, but disbelieving tone, as if she would not combat too rudely her curious prejudices. "What difference can a name make in the succession to Ashley? The thing is not possible."

"We don't see why such things should be and such not, Miss Anna; these matters are beyond our ken. I could tell you stranger things that run in families than this, but I could nae tell ye why they run; no, nor their ain selves, nor their kith nor kin: and we may plan and we may talk, but they can nae be turned aside. Sir Harry kens, and Sir Arthur kenned it afore him, that none but those three names, each in its turn, have ever been the lairds o' Ashley—nae matter how improbable, at one time, their succession may have seemed."

"If you intend to remain here, Sir Harry, I shall take my leave," interposed Lady Ashley, in a suppressed tempest of passion.

They all walked away, Sir Harry and his nephew making merry over old Hannah's solemn belief in the infallibility of a name. To give an instant's serious thought to such "trash"—Sir Harry's expression—would have been injurious to the dignity of all the Ashleys.

Yet what the old woman had stated was an incontrovertible fact—that since the creation of the baronetcy, two hundred years before, the holders of it had been Arthur, Henry, Ryle, Arthur, Henry, Ryle, in succession down to the present date. The two children walked together on the grass. They presented a complete contrast: the one, lowering and sullen in countenance, dark as his own nature, the other all smiles and good humour. Lady Ashley repeatedly called Carnegie, as if she would detach him from little Ryle, but Carnegie had inherited his mother's self-will, and declined to listen.

"What are you going to do with yourself to-morrow?" demanded Sir Harry of his nephew.

"I intend to have a day's fishing. There used to be capital trout in the stream. Do you ever trouble them?"

"Not I. I see no fun in the sport. If——"

A sharp cry, as of pain, interrupted them, and they looked round for the children. Carnegie Ashley, whose ire had been raised by something which he could not himself explain, was beating Ryle unmercifully.

"Hallo!" cried Mr. Ashley. "Carnegie! What beat a boy less than yourself!"

"Carnegie!" shouted Sir Harry; "have done, sir! Carnegie!"

It was of no use to call. Carnegie, in his fury, could not hear. The little child was screaming, as much from terror as from pain, for the blood was falling from his nose on to his handsome dress, but Carnegie still hit on. Mr. Ashley, who was up with them quicker than his uncle, seized Carnegie by the waist, and deposited him a few yards off, where he stamped and screamed. Sir Harry stormed at him, but Lady Ashley stood as immovable as a statue, looking at her son with intense satisfaction. Politeness kept Mr. and Mrs. Ashley from saying what they thought of Master Carnegie, and the parties separated for their different homes.

"Don't you allow that old creature a pension?" inquired Lady Ashley of her husband, as they walked towards Ashley. "Hannah Watson?"

"Yes."

"Then discontinue it."

"Out of my power, Lady Ashley. My father commenced it before his death, and left the charge to me. It is a sacred trust."

"She ought to be turned off the estate. How dared she insult us to our faces—saying that Carnegie would never succeed you?"

"For pity's sake don't let that trouble you," returned Sir Harry, laughing heartily. "Old Hannah was always full of her Scotch superstitions: she would make you believe in second sight, if you would listen to her. As worthy a woman, she, as ever lived, and was of quite a superior family, though she lowered herself by marrying my father's gamekeeper. I wish, Lauretta," he added more seriously, "you would go occasionally amongst the people on the estate: I think you might find it of advantage to you."

"The specimen I have met to-day has not been an inviting one," was the repellent reply of Lady Ashley.

Mr. Ashley sat broiling himself upon the edge of the trout stream, and, by his side, quiet as a mouse, sat little Ryle. Ere long, Sir Henry Ashley, holding Carnagie by the hand, came behind them. Ryle, who could not forget yesterday, shrank close to his father.

"What sport, Arthur?"

"Not any, yet. I had letters to write to-day, and did not come as soon as I thought of doing. There's a bite! hush! stop!"

There really was, the first bite. It was a poor little trout, not worth the landing, but Mr. Ashley secured him, almost with the delight of a schoolboy. It was nearly two years since he had enjoyed a day's fishing, and then not for trout. Carnagie and Ryle watched the process with interest. When Mr. Ashley threw his line into the water again, Sir Harry prepared to leave.

"I want to stay," said Master Carnagie.

"You cannot, Carnagie. I must take you home."

"Let him stay if you like," interposed Arthur. I'll take care of him. Provided," he added, turning to young Carnagie, "he promises to sit still and does not quarrel."

"No, I believe I must take him," rejoined Sir Harry. "His mother will find fault with me if I do not."

He walked away, dragging by the hand the unwilling boy, who kept his head turned round in the direction of the stream. When they came to the park, where the trees would shut out all view of it, Carnagie's feet became glued to the ground, and he sobbed out that he *would* go back to see the fish caught.

"The fish are ugly," said Sir Harry.

Carnagie's sobs increased to a roar; and Sir Harry, never famed for his resolution, yielded. "Well, run back," he said, "and sit down close to little Ryle. I will send Patience to fetch you presently. And hark ye, Carnagie—if you are troublesome to Mr. Ashley, or ill-natured to Ryle, I will never let you stay anywhere again."

Not waiting for a second permission, the boy darted straight back towards Mr. Ashley. Sir Harry watched him half-way across the plain, then turned, entered the park and was lost to view. At the same moment, Carnagie was attracted by the sight of a butterfly, and, postponing the fish-catching, child-like, for this new attraction, he changed his course and went after it. It drew him away to the right, bearing rather towards the stream. A curve in the banks soon took him beyond view of Arthur Ashley, even supposing the latter had known he was there, and looked after him, which he did not.

It was a famous chase. Now the butterfly would descend with fluttering wings, and Carnagie, raising his hands, would deem it in his clasp. Once he thought it was his, and took off his hat to throw over it; but away it soared, high and far, as if attracted by the scent

of the distant bean-field, which went stretching down to the stream, and away and away flew the child after it, drawing nearer and nearer toward the water.

Mr. Ashley sat on, at his sport, trying to hook the fish, his head running upon hooks of another sort, in the political world. Ryle began to show symptoms of weariness. His legs had never been still so long before. "Here's someone coming," he said to his papa.

It was a young woman, Carnagie's nurse. "If you please, sir," she said, advancing close to them, "where is Master Ashley?"

"Master Ashley!" returned Arthur, who did not know the girl. "Do you mean Master Carnagie Ashley?"

"Yes, sir. Sir Harry has just come home, and sent me here for him. He said he was fishing along with you, sir."

Arthur opened his eyes in wonder. "There is some mistake," he returned. "I think you must have misunderstood Sir Harry. He did not leave the child here."

"I am sure, sir, I did not misunderstand what Sir Harry said," was the reply of Patience. "My lady was not pleased, and Sir Harry said Master Ashley had made such a hullabaloo—as he called it—to stop and watch the fish caught, that he was forced to let him. And he ordered me to bring him home now, whether he cried or not."

"It is very extraordinary," exclaimed Mr. Ashley. "The child did want to remain, and I offered to take care of him, but Sir Harry said Lady Ashley would prefer his going home, and he took him away. Carnagie!" shouted Mr. Ashley, at the top of his voice, as he retreated from the bank and looked around. "Carnagie!"

No answer. The hum of the summer's afternoon, of the buzzing insects, of the gleeful birds, was in the air; but there was no other answer.

"You had better go back and inquire of Sir Harry where he left him," he said to the maid. "It was not here."

Accordingly she did so, making good speed, and Mr. Ashley resumed his seat and his rod. He was not in the least uneasy, and the matter faded from his mind, for he believed the mistake to be the servant's: that she had misunderstood her master. But, ere long, Lady Ashley was seen flying towards him.

"What have you done with my child?" she panted, as she approached; and her eyes glared, as he had never seen them glare but once, and that was several years before, in Ashley shrubbery, when she was Miss Carnagie.

Mr. Ashley rose, and raised his hat. He thought her strong emotion was but the effect of her exertion in running.

"I have sent the servant to the house to inquire of Sir Harry where he left him, Lady Ashley. It was not with me."

"It is false! False as you are, Arthur Ashley. Sir Harry did leave him with you. Give me my child! Where have you hidden him? Have you put him into the water?"

Before Mr. Ashley, surprised and confounded, could find words for reply, Sir Harry neared them. He was not so swift of foot as his wife. Patience also was advancing behind. "Arthur," called out Sir Harry, "where's Carnegie?"

"I have not seen him since you took him away. You remember you refused to leave him with me."

"I know I did. But he cried to come back, and I sent him. I watched him come."

"I assure you that he did not come," replied Mr. Ashley. "I have not stirred from this spot. Do you say you *watched* him come here?"

"I watched him half way across the field. He was making fast for you, straight as an arrow."

Arthur looked terribly confounded. And the more so because Lady Ashley still glared steadfastly upon him, with her white teeth set, and her accusing expression.

The servant, Patience, had turned aside, but was again seen advancing now. Her face was pale as with affright, and she laboured for utterance. "Oh, sir! oh, my lady!" was her confused exclamation, before she had well reached them, "Grimes's boy has just met me, and he says they think there's a child drowned, for a hat is floating on the water."

"Where? A hat—where?" demanded Mr. Ashley.

"Round there. Beyond the bend."

He rushed away, the rest following him. No one paid attention to little Ryle, so the servant picked him up in her arms, and ran after them.

Lower down the stream, much lower, they came upon a group of idlers who had collected there, labourers and others. One of them held on a stick a child's straw hat dripping with water, which he had just fished ashore. It was Carnegie Ashley's. There was nobody to be seen, they said, but it might be lower down: have gone down with the current.

"Is anything the matter?" demanded the voice of Surgeon Gay, hastening up to the people, whom he had discerned as he came along the by-path from the village.

"Matter enough," a countryman replied, "Sir Harry's heir was in the water. At least his hat was, and the boy was missing."

"I accuse him of the murder," impetuously broke forth Lady Ashley, pointing her finger at Arthur. "The child was left under his charge, and he pretends to know nothing of him. He put him into the water."

"Be quiet, be quiet, I entreat of you," cried Sir Harry, in agitation. "You cannot know what you are saying."

"The child stood between him and the inheritance," persisted Lady Ashley, who was excited almost to madness, far beyond all control. "Only yesterday we caught him plotting with one who

assured him his son should succeed to Ashley, and not Sir Harry's. It is he who has made away with the child."

Every vestige of colour—the bright colour of the Ashleys—had forsaken Mr. Ashley's cheeks, and the words, as he spoke, literally trembled from his agitated lips. "My friends," he said, standing bareheaded, "you have, most of you, known me from childhood, and can judge whether I am capable of committing so revolting a crime. Here"—he suddenly snatched at the hand of Ryle, and pulled him forward—"stands my own child: had the lives of the children been in my power, had I been compelled to sacrifice one of them, I swear to you that it should have been this one, rather than the other. Sir Harry," he added, clasping in his agitation the baronet's arm, "I never saw or heard your child from the moment you walked away with him: had I witnessed him in any danger, I would have saved his life at the expense of my own. Surely you believe me?"

"Yes, yes," groaned Sir Harry, wringing his nephew's hand. "I see how it is. I should have watched him into your charge. Something must have attracted the boy aside. It is my carelessness which has caused this."

"Oh, take heart, all of you! take heart, my lady!" said cheerful Surgeon Gay, who was sure to look on the best side of things: "you don't know yet that anything is really amiss with the boy. He may have strolled away. The hat's nothing," he continued, in answer to a man who raised it as if to confute his argument. "Last autumn, when my fourth boy's cap was discovered in Prout's Pond, and brought home, wet, to his mother, she wouldn't hear a word but that he was drowned, went into a succession of fits, and wanted me to put the shutters up. Two hours afterwards, the young Turk walked himself home, with his pinafore full of blackberries. He won't forget the tanning I gave him, though, if he lives to be a hundred."

The miller, James Heath, whose cottage was on the opposite shore, some way removed from it, was now seen crossing the foot-bridge. His face was whiter than usual, which it had little need to be, for it was always under a layer of flour. He stepped into the midst of the group, taking off his hat when he saw the Ashleys.

"Whose child is it?" he inquired. "My wife witnessed the accident from her bedroom window."

Lady Ashley grasped his arm, the white dust from the man's clothes soiling her rich gauze dress. "Speak, speak!" was echoed around, and "Speak!" reiterated that passionate lady; "tell me who threw him in."

"The little fellow was coming across the plain, my wife said, running hard, and throwing his hat up, as if trying to catch something. She thinks it might be one of the summer cockchafers, or maybe a butterfly. She could not see him distinctly so far off, but she believed it was one of the young ones from the parsonage. He was spinning along with all his might, his hat raised for another



throw, and he came, without knowing it, on to the edge of the water, and tumbled right in, head over heels."

"Why did she not save him—why did she not give the alarm?" uttered Mr. Ashley.

"Because she could not, sir, unfortunately, as Mr. Gay can tell you; she can't stir a peg."

Mr. Gay nodded. "She has not recovered the use of her limbs since her attack," he said, "and as they place her on a chair, so she must remain. I am on my way to see her now."

"She called and shouted," proceeded the miller, "till she was a'most hoarse, she says. But I was in my mill, and when that's a going there's no chance of my hearing anything else, and the girl was gone to the village. So the house-door was shut, and, more than that, all the windows were. Whose child was it?"

"It was the young heir."

The miller started, and looked at his landlord. "Oh, Sir Harry! I did not know——"

What he would have said was interrupted by Lady Ashley. "Who pushed him in?" she uttered—"who threw him into the stream? Was it not *he*, Arthur Ashley?"

"*He!*" repeated the miller, his countenance expressing every degree of astonishment. "Lord love ye, my lady! Mr. Arthur ain't one to hurt a hair of a child's head. The poor little innocent was a running about, in his sport, and fell in of his own accord. There was not a soul near him—more's the pity but what there had been."

The body was not found till late at night, by torchlight. Sir Harry and Mr. Ashley were both amongst the crowd on the bank, and it was the latter who received the unlucky child from the men. A momentary weakness overcame him. When it had passed, he turned to his uncle. "He was my little godson," he whispered. "I would give all I am worth to recall him to life. I would have given more than I am worth to save him."

But not so said the crowd. "It is a mercy for him that he is taken in his infancy," they murmured to each other, "before the responsibility of right and wrong can lie upon him. With his crafty disposition and violent passions, there's no telling what evil he might have done, had he lived; or what might not have been his end."

"And not less a mercy for the place," muttered Surgeon Gay to himself. "It would have fared but badly, had he lived to become Sir Carnegie Ashley."

*(To be continued.)*

## PARSIMONIOUS LIBERALITY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "HOW TO BE HAPPY, THOUGH MARRIED," &c.

THE scorn that is often expended upon the "meanness" of economical, not to say of miserly people, would be mitigated if it were known in how many cases their savings are put to a good use and given away generously. Economy is altogether different from penuriousness, for it is economy that can always best afford to be generous. In one of his lectures, Emerson relates the following anecdote: "An opulent merchant in Boston was called on by a friend on behalf of a charity. At that time he was admonishing his clerk for using whole wafers instead of halves; his friend thought the circumstance unpropitious, but to his surprise, on listening to the appeal, the merchant subscribed five hundred dollars. The applicant expressed his astonishment that any person who was so particular about half a wafer should present five hundred dollars to a charity; but the merchant said: 'It is by saving half-wafers and attending to such little things, that I have something to give now.' " We ourselves knew of an army surgeon who, because he drew good pay and was very saving, was considerably chaffed by his brother officers. One day he quietly remarked to one who hinted that it was shabby not to contribute more towards getting up some entertainment: "If you had an old father and mother in Ireland to support, perhaps you would not be so free with your coin."

The late Marquis of Westminster was as liberal in large affairs as he was saving in trifles. A clergyman, who had been to London to consult a doctor, was dining with him. "What did the doctor advise?" asked the nobleman. "Too absurd, my lord! Horse exercise." "Then why don't you take it?" "Because I have not a horse and can't afford to buy one." "Have you a stable and a paddock?" "Yes, my lord." "Then I will give you a horse." The next day a groom rode up to the house, leading a fine horse. The grateful parson offered the man a half-sovereign, but the groom declined to take more than sixpence, saying that it would be as much as his situation was worth to accept more. "But, please sir," he added, "give me twopence for the turnpike-gate. His lordship specially told me to be sure and ask for the twopence."

Is not the thrifty character of the Scotchwoman who is described in the following, which is taken from the *San Francisco Chronicle*, deserving of respect, when we reflect that she was saving, not for herself, but for the good of her home?

"It is awfully hard to be untrue to a Scotchwoman. She makes you so very comfortable, and holds you to her, not so much by her

heart as by your bank account. She doesn't always want new bonnets ; she is rather liable to object even to your having a new hat until the old one is quite worn out. A Scotch wife can keep her husband neat and trim, and herself and her children as well, at a smaller expense than any others. She doesn't want diamond earrings for her birthday. All you have to do is to show her your bankbook and kiss her and tell her you owe the big balance to her, and she is quite satisfied.

"One young fellow did not understand the Scotch spinster, and when he thought to please her he sent her a lovely and expensive basket of flowers. He went up to receive her thanks and smiles, and he was quite knocked over when she told him he hadn't a big enough salary to waste it buying flowers for her or anybody else, and she was sorry to see he was so extravagant, because otherwise he was 'a very pleasing young man.' He lied himself back into her good graces by saying he had got the flowers for nothing and he thought he could not make better use of them. She smiled graciously and said :

" ' Seein' they did na cost you anything, it's a great compliment.' "

" She was a woman after all. "

Radcliffe, who was physician to Queen Anne and William III., was a munificent benefactor of Oxford University, where he established the library called after him. No wonder that he left much money when he died, for, during his life, he was as mean as any miser could be. It caused him keen suffering even to pay a tradesman's bill, and yet the doctor could on occasions be very liberal. When another medico, called Drake, a hated rival of his, was broken in circumstances he gave fifty pounds to a lady for him. " Let him," he said, " by no means be told whence it comes. He is a gentleman, and has often done his best to hurt me ; he could, therefore, by no means brook the receipt of a benefit from a person whom he had used all possible means to make an enemy. " So it is that the manner of giving shows the character of the giver more than the gift itself.



## A GUILTY SILENCE.

## CHAPTER VI.

## A WELCOME SURPRISE.

THE evening of the day following that of Dr. Randolph's visit to Irongate House was devoted by Miss Davenant to a consideration of the state of her wardrobe, and to miscellaneous repairs. Latterly, however, the active fingers of Esther Sarel, the maid specially appointed to wait upon Miss Davenant, had lifted these cares off the shoulders of Margaret; and on looking through her wardrobe this morning, she found that there was really very little left for her to do. So, for lack of more serious occupation, she determined to make a slight alteration in the trimming of her bonnet; and as she toyed with the ribbons and flowers, and studied first one effect and then another, her brain was at the same time engaged desultorily on another and a very different train of thought.

Her finances stood more in need of repairs than her garments. When Trix's school bill for the last half should be paid, but very few pounds would remain in her purse; and of those few by far the larger proportion would have to go to her father, who, as we shall find in due course, was still green and flourishing, and still in a chronic state of impecuniosity. She had bought scarcely anything for herself during the past twelve months, and the wardrobe of Beatrice needed thorough renewal. She had set her heart, too, on a holiday trip to the Lakes, but, for the present, that seemed entirely out of the question; where, even, was the money for clothes to come from? In spite of herself, a feeling of bitterness crept over her at the thought that, after all her long and weary struggles against poverty, it should still be a doubtful question with her whether she could afford a new gown. It seemed as if the fruit of her labour had all gone to benefit others, and that for herself there was nothing but toil without end.

But Margaret soon put away this thought as unworthy of her, soon put the money question altogether out of her mind. In two days more her darling Beatrice would be here; and she fell to humming an old *chanson de Provence*, as though she were still a gay maiden of seventeen; when suddenly two soft hands were laid across her eyes, and her heart gave a great bound, and she knew that her sister was come. Next moment they had their arms round each other, and, with that bright head pressed to her bosom, Margaret cried tears of

sorrowful joy over the girl to whom she had been as mother and sister in one.

"Oh, my darling, my darling," murmured Margaret; "how glad I am that you are come!"

"You did not expect me so soon, did you, dear?" said Beatrice. "I thought I should give you a pleasant surprise. Madame Ducange decided, all at once, to start for London two days earlier than she had previously intended, and there was no time to write. You still look the same dear old Meg that I always remember you—not a bit altered."

"Flatterer!" sighed Margaret. "Where are your spectacles? Judge me by the alteration in yourself, and then say, if you dare, that I am unchanged. The laughing baby-sister that I once knew has vanished—whither? and in her stead I see to-day a rather tall young person, not ill-looking, who pronounces some of her English words with a French accent, and, *en revanche*, no doubt speaks French like a cockney. But, now, what will you have for breakfast? and how did you find your way in here without my knowing anything about it?"

"For breakfast, some of those cakes, if you please, which I saw a stout old lady busy baking as I came through your kitchen; I've had nothing since six this morning. As to how I came here, that is simple enough. I walked up from the station, there being no cab to be found, leaving my trunk to be sent after me; and the large gates being unfastened, I ventured in, and so through the shrubbery to the back of the house; for I wanted, if possible, to take you by surprise."

"You have made it possible by doing it," said Margaret, with another kiss. "But you must not have hot cakes for breakfast, child; they are indigestible."

"Then treat me to a fit of indigestion for once," urged Trix.

Margaret shrugged her shoulders, and rang the bell.

"This room of yours is really a very neat, cosy little nest," said Beatrice, glancing round as she sat at breakfast; "in fact, the whole house is greatly to my liking; and as to that dear, old, fat Miss Easterbrook, I am sure that I shall love her immensely."

"Remember that Miss Easterbrook will, in all probability, be your employer; and learn to speak of her with becoming respect."

"Oh, this is all between ourselves, you know. I shall be as demure as a mouse when the proper time comes."

"Then you think you shall like to live here?" said Margaret; "that you can make yourself contented and happy in this dull, smoky England?"

"I could be contented and happy anywhere, Meg, if only you were with me."

Seeing the two sisters thus together, and knowing them to be sisters, you might easily have found in the younger a certain vague, indefinite

likeness to Miss Davenant—a likeness of expression, rather than of features; for the features of Beatrice were not so well cut, they lacked somewhat of that clear chiselled completeness which distinguished those of Margaret.

But if the last few delicate touches of the master-sculptor's hand were needed to give them a thorough finish, they more than atoned for this deficiency, if such it may be called, by the warmth of their colouring, by their vivacity and ever-varying play of expression. Out of those bright brown eyes there looked at you a soul volatile and impressionable; keen to love and keen to hate; in some things as weak and whimsical as a child; in others as steadfast as a martyr.

Beatrice's hair was brown, like her eyes, and had in it a natural wave that defied restraint, and claimed for itself a certain airy freedom of conduct, the effect of which was by no means unpicturesque. She had one of those genuine English complexions, clear, bright, and healthy, that blush on the slightest provocation. She was tall, without being quite so tall as Margaret, and had a figure lithe and flexible in all its movements and graceful in all its outlines. Altogether, this Beatrice Davenant was a very charming young person; and Margaret herself could not help thinking so, as her sister sat opposite to her, dressed in a cloud of summer muslin, her white throat cinctured by a blue velvet band, and a light of gladness dancing in her eyes, as she laughed and chattered away, flitting quickly from one topic to another, as a bird flits from bough to bough.

"Such a quiet, sleepy, uneventful life as we led at that dear old *Pension Fleury*!" exclaimed Beatrice. "A slight change in the lessons, a still slighter difference in the meals, were the only events that served to distinguish one week-day from another. The monotony terrified me, crushed down both heart and brain as with a dull, leaden weight. The high walls of the *jardin*, beyond which we were rarely allowed to wander, seemed to suffocate me; I felt an intense longing to scale them, to get away by any means, however desperate—away into the great, free, joyous world outside. I often used to fancy that had it been my lot to pass the whole of my life in the *Pension Fleury*, such protests on my part against the wearisomeness of existence would, in the course of time, have become few and far between; that I should gradually have crystallised, as it were, as Madame Ducange and her sister must have done, if they ever really were young women, which I sometimes felt inclined to doubt; that, in the course of years, I should have become so accustomed to the unvarying sameness of such a life as to pine and fret whenever anything chanced to mar the clock-like regularity of its movements."

"Such a fate, my Trix, could never be thine, or I have not studied thy disposition aright. And now," continued Margaret, "if you have really done your breakfast, we will have a little music. That old semi-grand of mine has still a pleasant voice of its own when properly



humoured; let us see whether you have sufficient magic in your fingers to coax from it some of its sweet secrets."

So Beatrice sat down to the piano, and played one piece after another, till Margaret signified that she had had enough.

"And now, come and read me the first chapter of 'Tolla,'" she said. So Beatrice read aloud the first chapter of "Tolla."

"Quite good enough for all practical purposes," said the critical Margaret, referring both to the reading and the playing; "but susceptible of improvement. There is one thing that you must still continue to do."

"And what is that?"

"Practise, practise, practise."

"I thought my education was complete," sighed Beatrice, "and that I should have nothing to do now but teach others."

"In our profession, one's education can never be said to be complete; and I do not doubt that it is the same in every other profession worthy of the name."

"I am so weary of lessons and learning!" murmured Beatrice.

"You shall have a month's holiday, my Trix, before you do another lesson, and then we will strive to make them pleasanter to you than they have ever been yet. And now I will just write out a message to send by telegraph to Papa, telling him that he may expect us by the first train to-morrow; and then ——"

"How stupid I am!" interrupted Trix. "I forgot to tell you that I promised to meet Madame Ducange at Milhampton to-morrow, near to which town she has a sister living who is married to an Englishman. Madame pressed me so much to go and see her sister, and the place where she lives, that I could not well refuse; in fact, she would not part from me till I promised to meet her there to-morrow: and I have an invitation for you also, in my bag."

"Much obliged to Madame; but greatly as I should like to see her again, I must decline the visit," said Margaret, whose thoughts reverted involuntarily to the state of her wardrobe. "Neither do I feel very amicably towards her just now, for running away with you so soon after your arrival."

"It will only be for two days, dear," pleaded Trix; "after that, I shall be with you altogether."

"Having promised, you must of course go," said Margaret; "and our visit to Papa must be put off till you return."

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE MEETING IN THE LANE.

On the evening of the day of Trix's arrival at Irongate House, she and Margaret set out for a country ramble. After wandering about the fields, and hunting for the rarer kinds of wild flowers till they

were tired, they turned their faces homeward, and found themselves after a time in one of those pleasant, leafy, zigzag lanes, shut in by high green banks, and overshadowed by a green tracery of boughs, which seem made on purpose for lovers' rambles on dewy summer eves. They had nearly reached the end of this lane when a sudden turn brought them face to face with Hugh Randolph. With a little spasm of vexation, Margaret saw that a meeting was inevitable, and so decided to make the best of what could not be helped. With outstretched hand and ready smile, she turned to greet the young doctor; but, for once, her smile was only of the lips, and just then no light of welcome shone in those dark and troubled eyes.

"Now this is really a pleasant surprise!" she murmured sweetly, as her fingers rested lightly for a moment in Hugh's palm. "In us you behold two poor damsels of vagrant habits, who have been wandering forlorn o'er hill and dale in search of the fair goddess Hygeia; and now that you have come thus suddenly upon us, issuing from yonder gloomy wood like some hero of old romance, we will accept your convoy as far as our ancestral castle, whose battlements are even now discernible above the trees."

Hugh bowed low in mock solemnity.

"With me you are already acquainted," continued Margaret, "but the damsel at my side, if I mistake not, has been seen by you but once before—in Lutetia the Beautiful—and that so long ago, that it were well, perhaps, to look upon this in the light of a first meeting. Thus then, Sir Knight, allow me to introduce to your notice and protection my sister, the Demoiselle Beatrice Davenant, a feather-brained young person of immature intellect and undecided tastes. Trix, child, this is Sir Hugh de Randolph, a gallant soldier of these parts, whose life is devoted to doing battle with the grim dragon, Disease, in all his thousand hideous forms; and, to my mind, it is one of the noblest causes for which a man can buckle on armour. Make thy prettiest curtsy to so distinguished a knight."

And with a low cynical laugh, Margaret fell back a pace or two, and resumed her hunt for wild-flowers with the utmost apparent unconcern.

Ordinarily, Hugh Randolph was one of the most self-possessed of individuals, but on the present occasion, his usual coolness and happy audacity quite deserted him for some moments, and the sensation was, for him, both novel and unpleasant. He did somehow contrive to mutter something that was almost inaudible about the pleasure he felt at meeting Beatrice again, intermixing with it the assurance that their first meeting in Paris had by no means been forgotten by him; to all which Trix contrived to murmur some equally commonplace reply (is not the most delicious love generally made in commonplaces?); and then, by some strange accident, their eyes chanced to meet, and in Trix's brown orbs Hugh read—or fancied that he read, for in many things he was a presumptuous mortal—

something that emboldened him, and at the same moment kindled in his heart a delicious fire that thrilled through all his veins, and shone through his eyes, and made all the world to him seem suddenly beautiful.

They had halted for a couple of minutes only, and were now wandering slowly onward towards the end of the lane. Hugh's eager, passionate glance had not escaped unnoticed by Margaret's keen eyes, nor the heightened flush on Trix's cheek ; so, with a little sigh, she tossed her wild flowers contemptuously away and moved into position adroitly between the two. But Hugh had contrived to pull himself together by this time, and when he next spoke his tones were just as grave and quiet as usual. His conversation naturally reverted to the youthful ward whom he had taken to Paris the year before ; and although, as he told Beatrice, he had heard from her frequently, he was yet anxious to have the assurance of one who had seen her so lately that she was really well and happy. The topic was one that interested Trix, and by means of a judicious question now and again Margaret contrived to make it last till they reached the cross-road which led from the direct Helsingham road to Irongate House and that part of the suburbs. Margaret would not hear of Dr. Randolph going a step further with them, and was so peremptory in the matter that he was fain to obey with the best grace possible. So a friendly farewell was said and they parted.

Trix was tired with her walk and inclined, for more reasons than one, perhaps, for silence and reverie ; whereas Margaret was in what, for her, was an unusually talkative mood, and entered into an elaborate account of the management and interior economy of Miss Easterbrook's establishment ; sketching in as she did so, with a few light and humorous touches, the portrait of the kind-hearted proprietress, and those of the different teachers, till all Trix's sentimental cobweb fancies had vanished, for that time, at least, and her hearty, joyous laugh made music in the empty house.

Margaret's sleep that night was troubled by strange dreams ; vague forecasts of coming trouble they seemed to her after she awoke. Even after Margaret had breakfasted, and had seen Trix off by train on her visit to Madame Ducange, she found it quite impossible to shake off the painful impression produced on her mind by this dream.

"It must not be," she cried, with an angry stamp of her foot as she paced her little sitting-room after her return from the station. "Have I toiled for her early and late, and impoverished myself all these years merely that she may become the wife of an obscure country surgeon ? It is quite evident that but a little spark is needed here to kindle a great fire. It must be my task to keep them apart, and that will not be so very difficult after school recommences.

The mood in which she then was was one not readily to be dissipated, so long as she chose to give way to such vain self-communing. So, in order to divert her mind from a subject so

painful, she went herself and fetched little Miss Morrison, the invalid pupil, down to her own room, greatly to the delectation of the latter; for Dora was beginning to find the monotony of her chamber, and the company of the good-natured but somnolent Mrs. Greene, somewhat wearisome. Besides which, she had already discovered that the severe and awe-inspiring Miss Davenant of the classroom was a very different personage from the smiling, benignant Miss Davenant of vacation time, and was fast learning to love her with all a school-girl's gushing affection. So Dora was installed in Margaret's own easy-chair and propped up with pillows; and then Margaret played to her all sorts of delicious music and sang all the gayest ditties with which her memory was stored. By-and-by, a dainty tea for two was brought in, and if Dora lives to be a hundred, she will never forget the flavour of that delicious honey. But presently came Mrs. Greene, like the bitters that always follow the sweets in life, and vowed that it was time for missy to go to her own room, for what would Dr. Randolph say next morning if he found his little patient worse instead of better? So, after half-an-hour's grace, asked for her by Margaret, Dora was obliged to bid her darling Miss Davenant good night, not without a kiss and a nestle on her shoulder first, you may be sure, and accompany the "Green Ogre," as the worthy house-keeper was nicknamed by the pupils of Irongate House, up to bed.

Left alone, Margaret took up a book of travel that had just been sent her from the library, and strove to compose her mind for a little quiet reading. But her thoughts would go back to that troubled business which had occupied them in the morning. She found herself skimming one page after another without having the least recollection of what she had read. At length she flung down her book in despair, and rang the bell imperatively, as though it were an exorcism by means of which she could charm away the dark web of tangled thoughts which clouded her brain this sunny evening. Almost before the last tinkle had died away, the door was softly opened, and Esther Sarel waited to receive the commands of Miss Davenant.

A country-bred girl, evidently, this Esther Sarel, judging from the fresh, healthy colour in her face—a face by no means without freckles during these hot summer months; irregular in its outlines; rather a homely face, in fact, but prepossessing from its expression of sincerity and good temper. She had dark, frank-looking eyes; hair crisp and wavy, in colour a reddish-brown; a mouth too wide to be handsome, but which curved readily into a smile, displaying as it did so a set of very white teeth, which had been the secret envy of Miss Easterbrook from the day that lady had first seen them. In dress and personal appearance Esther was the very pink of neatness, otherwise you may be sure she would never have been appointed to wait on Miss Davenant.

"I am going into the town, Esther, to make a few purchases," said Margaret, "and I shall call on Miss Ivimpey when I have done

shopping. In the meantime I want you to go as far as Leyland's, to inquire whether the bonnet which they had a fortnight ago to clean is yet done. If it is not done, urge them to get it completed by to-morrow evening, as I shall probably go out of town the following day, and shall want it. If the bonnet is done bring it with you ; but whether it be done or not, call at Miss Ivimpey's as you come back, and let me know the result of your visit."

A few minutes later Margaret was ready to go out. She took her way slowly through the shubbery, and, with the aid of a pass-key, let herself out through a side door into the high-road. Sunset splendours filled the Western sky as she took her way towards the town. After reaching the foot of the hill she had to pass through a long, pleasant, straggling suburb before coming to the busier parts of Helsingham. The main street of the little town was quite crowded this fine summer evening with a laughing, talking, heedless throng, through which Margaret held on her way steadily.

She felt inspired by the bustle and liveliness around her, following, as they did, so close upon her morbid, solitary musings. She had three or four small purchases to make at different places, but they did not detain her long ; and at last she found herself at Miss Ivimpey's and the post-office.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### MARGARET.

THE Helsingham post-office had originally been a private residence, of genteel and dignified appearance, and dated its entrance into public life from the introduction of the system of penny postage, up to which time a corner of a window in a grocer's shop had been found sufficient to meet all the postal requirements of the little town. A large bow-window that opened into the main street, the lower panes of which were composed of ground glass, while the upper ones were covered with post-office notices, formed the medium of communication with the public ; over which window a rude portico had latterly been built, to serve as a shelter from the weather. The entrance to the house was down a gateway or passage at the side, a fashion by no means uncommon even among the better class of Helsingham houses. As you went in by this door, there was a wide oaken staircase before you ; on the right was a glass door, shaded by a thin muslin blind, which opened into the office ; and on the left, another door admitting into the family sitting-room. Margaret found the outer door set open this hot summer evening, and was just about to summon someone when Miss Ivimpey, coming suddenly out of the office, caught her with the knocker in her hand. They greeted each other cordially, and Miss Ivimpey, who just then was busy sorting the letters of a country mail which had lately come in, made Margaret go back with

her into the office, and placed her on a chair of state in the middle of the room.

"You know, dear, I don't make a point of asking people in here who come to see me," said Miss Ivimpey; "and I suppose Charles would say it was contrary to instructions to do so; but I make an exception in favour of you, and one or two more old friends. I shall have finished this bag in five minutes, and then we can have a comfortable chat, for it's nearly an age since I saw you last."

Miss Ivimpey was a spare-built lady, of middle age, neatly dressed in a gown of snuff-coloured merino, with a black silk apron and black lace mittens; with a pair of silver-rimmed spectacles perched on the extreme tip of her nose; and with six fat little curls of her own grey hair—curls such as she had worn when a girl of eighteen, except that they were then black—kept in their places by the aid of a couple of small combs. Crowning these curls was a flimsy but wonderful structure, compact of lace, ribbons and artificial flowers, tossed together in an elaborately careless fashion, held together with a stitch or two of the needle, and styled, by courtesy, a cap. These caps, which were Miss Ivimpey's own invention and manufacture, were at once the plague and delight of her life, and the envy and admiration of her friends.

"There, my dear Miss Davenant, that's out of hand for another four-and-twenty hours," said Miss Ivimpey, as she proceeded to seal up the bag on which she had been engaged. "Excuse me, my dear friend, but you don't take exercise enough; you don't get out sufficiently into the fresh air and sunshine. No use your shaking your head at me; I know that what I say is true, or else why those pale cheeks, and those dark circles under your eyes? You learned, studious folk are apt to forget one thing, that it is foolish wisdom to cultivate the mind at the expense of the body. Look at my brother Charles, now; he's as fresh as a daisy, and as rosy as a new-boiled lobster, and yet he is up at work in the office till three o'clock in the morning every night of his life. (I hope that's not an Irishism, my dear.) And how does he manage to do it, and keep so hearty? Why, as soon as he has had his breakfast, between ten and eleven, he takes down his rod, and puts on a pair of strong boots, and away he goes, four or five miles down the river, to some favourite fishing-spot, and he seldom gets back till dark; but whether he brings any fish home or not, he can't help getting the exercise, and that's just what keeps him as well as he is."

Here came an interruption in the form of a tap outside the window, and Miss Ivimpey limped across the room—one of her legs was shorter than the other—to attend to it. On opening the little casement by means of which she communicated with the public, a shock head of hair and two dirty hands could be seen above the window-sill, from the youthful owner of which came a shrill request: "A penny postage, if you please, 'm."



"I have come, this evening, on purpose to speak to you about the case of John Betts," said Margaret, when she returned. "You may, perhaps, remember that I spoke to you about him a short time ago. Betts is a good honest fellow, but he can't get any permanent work here, so he has made up his mind to try his fortunes in Australia. Some friends have contrived to find the necessary funds to pay the passage of himself and family, but his wife and children are wretchedly off for clothing, and I think the case is one where the Sewing Society might reasonably afford some assistance."

"To be sure, my dear Miss Davenant; very right of you to mention it; and I'll lay the case before the Society at its meeting next week. But how is it, my dear friend, if you will allow me to ask, that you have never been to any of the Society's meetings these three months past? Your absence has been a source of much remark, I assure you."

"I have been busily engaged for some time past," replied Margaret. "When my day's duties in the school are over, I rarely feel any desire to go out. My brain tells me to shut myself up in my room, and not read anything heavier than a novel, on pain of having one of those fearful headaches to which I am so liable; and then, you know, I always take my constitutional in a morning."

I am afraid that Miss Davenant was not altogether ingenuous in her statement of the reasons which prevented her from attending the weekly meetings of the Helsingham Sewing Society. She had made a point of being a regular attendant at them for some time after Miss Ivimpey had pressed her into becoming a member; she had found the change from the dullness of the schoolroom to the company of the kind-hearted, garrulous, middle-aged ladies of whom the Society was chiefly composed, beneficial to her health of mind; she could relish a bit of quiet gossip, too, as well as any of her neighbours. But when, after a time, in consequence of the accession of certain new members, this harmless gossip began to degenerate into downright scandal, Margaret quietly resolved to stay at home for the future, and give the Society, which effected much good in its way, the benefit of her needle without that of her company.

"But now that the vacation has commenced," urged Miss Ivimpey, "you have, doubtless, more spare time on your hands, and I hope we shall have the pleasure of seeing you at our next meeting."

"Had you a good attendance last Monday evening?" asked Margaret evasively.

"Yes, very good. Everybody was there, except yourself and Miss Timmins. Ah! that's the Crickfield mail-cart coming up the street, at a good pace too, and with five minutes to spare!"

Next minute a hardy-looking, weather-beaten man entered the office,

carrying several small, sealed letter-bags, which he gave into the hands of Miss Ivimpey, receiving from her the return bags, with which he would start back in the course of a few minutes, and the contents of which would be distributed among various outlying villages early next morning. As soon as the man was gone, Miss Ivimpey proceeded to open the bags he had brought, one after another, shaking out the contents on to the desk before her, ready for sorting. Margaret rose to go. Esther was long in coming: perhaps she had been detained somewhere on the road; it was not worth while waiting for her any longer.

"Do not stir yet, my dear Miss Davenant," exclaimed the post-mistress. "My brother will be here in a few minutes, and then I shall be at liberty, and will walk a little way back with you, if you have no objection."

Margaret sat down again: a few minutes more or less would not matter.

"I think it will be as well to light the gas before proceeding any further," observed Miss Ivimpey. "My eyes are not so young as they used to be, and these country-written addresses are often very difficult to make out."

But one of the burners refused to give more than a very faint light when the match was applied to it. So Miss Ivimpey, who, despite her lameness, was still tolerably active, placed a chair against the desk, and then mounted from one to the other, so as to have full command of the offending tube, and then proceeded to remove the obstruction with a needle. Having accomplished her task, she prepared to descend; but, in doing so, her foot suddenly slipped, and in trying to save herself from falling, the skirts of her dress swept on to the floor the whole of the letters which she had just taken out of the country bags and spread on the counter ready for sorting, together with one other letter, which Miss Ivimpey had put aside for special delivery; a letter written on foreign paper, and which had not formed part of the Crickfield mail.

Miss Ivimpey was on the floor almost as soon as the letters were. "Don't disturb yourself, I beg, Miss Davenant," she exclaimed, as she began to pick them up. "How very awkward of me, to be sure!"

Margaret, from delicacy, forebore to touch the letters, which were quickly replaced on the counter—all except the one written on foreign paper, which, unperceived by either of the ladies, had slid under the flounces of Margaret's dress, and lay there still. Miss Ivimpey had not missed it.

"Charles's footstep, I declare!" observed Miss Ivimpey; "and I'll be bound that gossiping girl of ours is out somewhere, and no kettle boiling. Pray excuse me for a minute or two, while I go and brew him a cup of tea: he always likes one cup of strong tea when he comes in from fishing."

Left alone, Margaret looked at her watch, and finding the hour later than she had supposed, she determined to wait for Esthe. no longer, forgetting, for the moment, that Miss Ivimpey had promised to go part of the way back with her. As she rose and pushed away her chair, she heard a sound of tearing paper; and, stepping hastily back, she saw, to her horror, a letter on the floor partially torn open; it had been caught by her chair, or her foot, or the heavy flounces of her dress; anyhow, there it was, with a great longitudinal strip torn right across its face; the seal, too, was completely smashed, and the letter pulled half open. Margaret picked it up, wondering how she should excuse herself to Miss Ivimpey for her carelessness, when she saw that it was addressed to "Hugh Randolph, Esquire, Surgeon, Helsingham, England," and that it bore the post-mark of Melbourne, Australia. While she was still looking at it, her eye was caught by three lines of the contents, visible through the rent in the paper, which she read to herself without knowing that she did so, her mind being still busy, wondering what Miss Ivimpey would say to the accident. But as she read, she started and turned pale; and the same instant a terrible temptation flashed, clear and lurid as a shaft of lightning, across her brain. She trembled, and clutched the letter tightly in both hands; and stood for a moment breathless, like one suddenly turned to stone, thinking as she had never thought before.

But there was an unseen witness of her proceedings, in the person of her maid, Esther Sarel, who, on coming to the post-office by her mistress's directions, found the front-door wide open, as already stated. While hesitating a moment how best to make her presence known, Esther's eye was attracted by the light from the office shining through the muslin blind that shaded the glass door, and took in, at the same time, with a woman's intuitive picking out of such a trifle, a minute rent in the muslin, just large enough for anyone to look through. Had Esther's thoughts at this juncture formed themselves into words, their import would have been, "I'll just peep through that tiny hole, and see whether Miss Davenant is there."

Margaret was just stooping to pick up the letter as Esther applied her eye to the peep-hole; and some vague feeling of girlish curiosity induced the latter to remain a silent witness of what followed. She saw that a great strip was torn off one side of the letter; she saw the change that swept over Margaret's face when her mind took in the full import of the words which her eyes had unconsciously read; she saw the white, firm-set face, the locked and resolute features, and the wild, scared look in the large black eyes, that yet burned with a strange fire, such as the girl had never seen in them before. Then, thinking she heard footsteps advancing from the inner room, she stepped back noiselessly into the passage, and fled thence into the street, where she wandered about aimlessly for ten minutes or more, before she could summon up sufficient courage to go back to the

post-office, and make her presence known, as she ought to have done at first, by a knock at the side-door.

But Miss Ivimpey had gone back into the office before this time. Margaret, still standing with the torn letter in her hands, while a flood of burning thoughts rushed across her brain, was disturbed by the sudden entrance of her friend. In the hurry and nervous agitation of the moment, she crushed the letter between her fingers, and thrust it quickly into the bosom of her dress. From that moment her punishment began.

Miss Ivimpey had got some embroidery she wanted to show Margaret, and would not hear of her going just yet. Then came Esther, who was asked into the office to deliver her message to her mistress, and had to stand by the counter for a minute or two, while Miss Ivimpey and Margaret discussed the question of the cleaned bonnet; the latter, alas! with what an absent heart and painfully forced attention! Already, for her, such trifles had lost all interest.

Esther was quickly dismissed, and told to get home as soon as possible. Miss Ivimpey was just going to get ready to accompany Margaret, when who should arrive but Mrs. Crowle, wife of the head lawyer in Helsingham. They all adjourned to the drawing-room, where Mrs. Crowle was charmed to have the pleasure of being introduced to Miss Davenant, who really must have taken immense pains with her Lucy and Emily, the progress they had made in various branches during the two halves they had been at Irongate House being something wonderful. And so there must be half an hour's chat about education in general, and the merits of Lucy and Emily in particular, before Margaret could get away; and then she went alone, for which she was not sorry, Miss Ivimpey being obliged to stay at home and entertain her guest.

Margaret took the road homeward like a woman in a dream. Mechanically she put her hand up to her bosom;—yes, the letter was still there, all crushed and crumpled, as she had hid it hastily within the folds of her dress. She was going the shortest way home, which would take her past Dr. Randolph's house; but when she reached the market-place, instead of going straight along the lower side of it, as she would ordinarily have done, and so have passed the house, she chose rather to go out of her way, and along the upper side; and so through the covered market, and out into Stillman's Lane; and thence up the hill at a swift pace, leaving the town behind her, in which the lamps were now being lighted one after another, for the dusky summer twilight was deepening into night. She felt already that she would gladly give all she possessed, if by so doing she could replace the letter on Miss Ivimpey's desk, and bring back the peace of mind which had been her own but one short hour ago. She had degraded herself for ever in her own eyes. She, the refined and fastidious Margaret Davenant, who secretly prided herself on her intellectual attainments, had actually read part of a letter belonging

to another person ; and, worse still, was at that moment conveying the letter surreptitiously away ! She stopped in her hurried walk, and pressed her hand to her forehead, and asked herself whether she was not beset by some horrible nightmare. The old theory of demoniacal possession seemed to her, at that moment, a fact that breathed a dread significance. Then her fingers wandered to her bosom again. It was all true, then ? the accursed scrap of paper, for which she had sold herself to the fiend, was really there ! The force of the temptation, which for one brief instant had so dazzled her brain as to confound her distinction of right and wrong, was already so far weakened that it dwelt in her memory as a wild, vague, impossible scheme, such as might haunt the dreams of a mad woman. But was it indeed too late to repair the wrong she had done ? No ! she would go back at once, and tell Miss Ivimey everything, and take the consequences, whatever they might be. She knew Dr. Randolph well, and she felt assured that he would forgive her. But in that case she must give up all thought of acting on the information she had bought at such a bitter cost. Well, better that—better anything, rather than that she should keep this accursed letter which belonged to another !

Thinking thus, Margaret Davenant turned to retrace her way to the post-office ; but had not gone back more than a few yards when she was overtaken by Esther Sarel, pale, and breathless with running.

"Oh, Miss, I'm so glad to have caught you !" exclaimed the girl. "Here's a telegraphic message, which I found when I got home ; and as the envelope is marked 'Immediate,' I thought I'd better run off and try to find you. I do hope it contains no bad news."

Margaret took the envelope with a foreboding heart and, hurrying to the nearest lamp, tore it open and read, "Your sister has met with an accident. Come by first train."

"Inquire at the station what time the next train for the south is due," said Margaret to Esther, "and then follow me home as quickly as possible." And with that, she turned her face from the post-office and set out at a rapid pace for Irongate House, forgetting, for a time, the letter and everything else in this sudden access of a new trouble, of the dimensions of which she was as yet in utter ignorance.

## CHAPTER IX.

### STRUGGLING UPWARD.

In a little cottage, with flagged floors and whitewashed walls, in one of the lowest suburbs of Helsingham, dwelt Silas Ringe and his bed-ridden mother. Silas had been left fatherless when quite a little fellow, but his mother had an annuity, or "pension," as she called it, of some twenty pounds a year, which, together with the money she earned by going out as charwoman—for she had only become infirm of late years—had been sufficient to maintain the two in tolerable



comfort till Silas grew up to be a young man, and was able to take part of the burden on to his own shoulders. Silas was a carpenter by trade, and—despite his club foot, touching which he was to the full as sensitive as the celebrated poet who suffered from a similar infirmity—an excellent carpenter too. The little household was completed by the presence of a red-armed and red-haired young woman, whom Silas had imported from a neighbouring agricultural district, to look after the comforts of his helpless mother and prepare his own meals.

As a lad, Silas had been constitutionally weak and ailing, and each of his birthdays, as it came round, was a fresh surprise to his mother, who, as she often said to her neighbours, had made up her mind years ago that he was not long for this world. He was apprenticed to a carpenter because whatever tastes he had were supposed to lie in that direction. When little more than a child, he would sit quietly, for hours at a time, with a bit of wood and a pocket-knife, fashioning to the best of his ability, sometimes a boat, sometimes a doll's head, then an elephant or a rough dog; all very rudely done, in some cases almost requiring to be labelled before one could tell what particular animal they were intended to represent. He kept on using his knife all the time he was at school. It was the lad's only friend, for he never cared to mingle much among his schoolfellows; and many a scrape he got into through carving his own and his companions' names on form and desk and schoolroom door.

But when Silas's apprenticeship was six months old, he shut up his knife and determined to put it to such unprofitable use no more. At the bottom of the garden which ran back from his mother's cottage was an old outhouse, and this was now converted by Silas into a workshop, where most of his leisure time was passed. Here he put up a small joiner's bench and a rude lathe; and, with such tools as he could get together, for he had to buy them second-hand and one at a time out of his scanty pocket-money, he began the construction of a table for his mother. But the table lingered month after month, and was deserted by the time it was half done for some other object which took his fancy more strongly, and so with twenty other different things, which he set about in red-hot ardour, but grew disgusted with before completion. Even for the business to which he was apprenticed he was beginning to show signs of indifference and disgust, chafing under the restraints to which he was subjected, and looking forward already to the time when he should be his own master and able, if so minded, to wander away into that great world of which he knew so little and seek his fortune elsewhere. So, after a time, the outhouse was shut up and the tools left to rust in idleness, and Silas, a shy, shambling youth of eighteen, who blushed on the slightest provocation, felt that life held nothing worth living for, and was ready to believe himself one of the most ill-used individuals in existence.



This was, for Silas Ringe, a period of transition, which lasted for nearly two years—a strange, wretched time, during which he was like a man groping in the dark, striving in vain to find some crevice in his dungeon through which a ray of blessed sunlight might fall. There was a power within him crying aloud, with a voice full of anguish, but its words were beyond his skill to interpret. He was more moody, silent and irritable at this time than he had ever been before. "He mought be cutting his eye-teeth over again, he's that bad-tempered," observed his mother to one of the neighbours. "He sits glowering into the fire for hours at a time: and when he's spoken to, as often as not he'll never answer back. What's come over the lad it's past my bit of knowledge to find out. I thought, at first, he must be in love: but now, I'm sadly afeard it's something far worse."

What that something was, and whether it was better or worse than being in love, Silas himself would have been utterly unable to explain, it was like a dull smouldering fire burning within him continually—a sacrificial fire that demanded its victims, and, as yet, Silas could find nothing to immolate but his own heart.

Perhaps the greatest show-place in all those pleasant midland counties, in the heart of which Helsingham is situated, is Cheveleigh House, the residence, for about six weeks each year, of the Duke of Cheltenham; celebrated, chiefly, for its magnificent gardens, and its collection of pictures, equalled by few private galleries in the kingdom. People from all parts of the country visit Cheveleigh House, for there is no difficulty in getting through it. As guests, it has probably, at one time or another, entertained more distinguished personages than any other house in England not an abode of royalty.

The Duke's steward having decided that certain repairs were required in some of the domestic offices attached to the House, it fell out that Silas Ringe and several of his fellow-workmen were sent to execute the repairs in question. The work they had to do occupied them for several days, but when they were ready to start back for Helsingham, the steward was gracious enough to say that he supposed they would like to see over the house and grounds before leaving, and deputed one of the footmen to act as their *cicerone*. To the fancy of Silas Ringe, the whole place seemed like a magnificent castle that had been transplanted from fairy-land. As he wandered through one gorgeous saloon after another, crowded with treasures of ancient and modern art, and caught glimpses, through the lofty windows, of that wonderful gardener's landscape outside, where trees and flowers, statues and fountains, green turf and winding gravel-walk, were mingled with such consummate art, and with such an eye for effect, he felt crushed by his own utter insignificance.

Only two more rooms and the sculpture gallery remained to be seen, when, in a saloon, smaller and dingier than any through which they had yet passed, Silas's eye was caught by something high up on one of the walls, which he proceeded to examine with a rapt atten-

tion, such as he had bestowed on nothing else which he had yet seen. Observing the young workman's eager gaze, the officiating Jeames condescended to explain. "That," said he, in his lofty, sing-song style, like a showman in a superior way of business, "is a group of dead birds carved in wood by the celebrated Grinling Gibbons, and said to be one of the finest specimens of that well-known master. To the left is a piece of lace cut out of a single block by the same hand."

Silas's hungry eyes seemed as though they would never be tired of gazing. He lingered till all his companions had gone forward into the next room, and was only recalled to himself by an impatient summons from the conductor of the party. He had but little attention left for anything that was shown afterwards. These two masterpieces of carving dwelt in his memory—a vision of beauty never by him to be forgotten. He saw, and he determined to imitate. That was as far as his ambition carried him as yet—merely to imitate. The time was not yet ripe ; he had many bitter lessons to learn by heart before the true measure of his strength should dawn upon him, and he should learn that not in dead imitations of others, but through vital creations of his own, could his genius ever blossom into the perfect flower. For true it was—an indisputable fact—that this poor washerwoman's son was informed with the divine fire of genius, was touched with that celestial madness with which, in a higher degree, a Praxiteles, a Michael Angelo, a Thorwaldsen were stricken. Day and night, for nearly a week after he got home, Silas Ringe brooded over those two masterpieces of the great carver which he had seen at Cheveleigh House ; and then, out of his scanty savings, he purchased a block of boxwood and a set of carver's tools, which latter articles he had to order specially from London, there being nothing of the kind known in Helsingham. These obtained, he set to work to produce in wood a representation of a stuffed snipe, which, in its rude glass case, had formed one of the chief ornaments of his mother's cottage from time immemorial. Much time and much patient labour were expended by Silas on this, his first work since the days of his pocket-knife caricatures at school, and the result was something very closely approaching a failure. When the snipe was finished to the best of his ability, he put it on the table before him, and sat staring at it in a sort of comic despair. Could that ungainly log of wood be seriously intended to afford anyone a representation of the sprightly, long-billed hunter of wintry pools ? It would serve admirably to mend the fire with, but was certainly fit for nothing more. "Try again ; better luck next time," said Silas in his homely way. And try again he did, and again and again after that, each effort being an improvement on the previous one, and approaching nearer to that standard of perfection which he had set up in his own mind. Then, when he had had enough of the snipe, he set to work on a dead robin, which he found one morning frozen among the snow ; but when he had done his best, his robin

was but a very rude copy of the original, or seemed so to the fastidious Silas. After the robin, he tried his skill on a wreath of mistletoe and ivy ; and this was a labour of love, which lasted him from midwinter till far into spring ; for Silas possessed indomitable perseverance, and a patience that knew no weariness. And so he went on from one thing to another, slowly and almost imperceptibly advancing. After many efforts and blind struggles, his genius had at length found its proper outlet, and he was happy in his work. Much of that moody, irritable manner which had characterised him before now wore itself gradually away ; and although he was still as shy and awkward as ever he had been, his shyness was merely that of a sensitive nature that fears a rebuff, and his awkwardness that of one who lacks self-confidence, and has never had an opportunity of smoothing away some of his angularities by contact with the world of men and manners. However distasteful to him his ordinary occupation as a carpenter might be, he rarely alluded to it ; but when his apprenticeship was over, he quietly asked for and obtained employment as a journeyman under his old master, and seemed, to all his acquaintances, to have settled down into the groove in which he would run for the remainder of his life, as an unambitious country carpenter of average abilities.

Such was Silas Ringe at the age of twenty-four, when he first comes before the reader as a character in this history : a thin, angular-jointed young fellow, with a white, consumptive-looking face ; with straw-coloured hair and a sandy beard, straggling and pointed ; with blue eyes that looked rather weak and watery in the full glare of mid-day, but which seemed to shine with a lustre all their own when darkness set in, and Silas, shut up in his little outhouse, with his lamp and his chisel, saw his work grow in beauty before him, and caught, at such times, clearer glimpses of Nature's method of working than at any other.

A few specimens of Silas's handiwork had got scattered about the town by this time, and one man at least there was—Van Noorden, the bookseller—who thought he saw in these labours of his young townsman evidence of talent far out of the ordinary way. Van Noorden, the first opportunity he had, showed one or two of the carvings to Lord Borrowash, who looked in at his shop occasionally when in the town. Lord Borrowash prided himself on being a connoisseur and patron of the arts generally, and had a very wide knowledge of matters relating to old pictures, old sculpture, old carvings, old china, and black-letter editions ; and being a man of few prejudices, he was always ready to extend a helping hand—providing such act did not necessitate the dipping of his other hand into his pocket—to struggling merit. And merit there undoubtedly was in the wood-carvings of Silas Ringe, as his lordship was not slow to perceive ; and he left with the worthy bookseller an intimation that he should be glad if the young artist would take an early opportunity of calling upon him.

White Towers, as everybody knows who is learned in such matters, is the ancestral seat of the Borrowash family ; but the present lord had never lived there since he came into the title. His father and grandfather before him had been noted spendthrifts and gamblers ; and he himself, in his salad days, had been a tremendous dandy, with a weakness for horseflesh and the coulisses ; all which ended, at last, in a sharp pull-up from the Jews, a crash, and a compulsory residence abroad for the space of fifteen years. He did not drop in for the title and estates till he was forty-five years old, when he found himself with a constitution and a fortune dilapidated alike ; so he set himself sedulously to the nursing of one and the other, having found leisure enough, during his enforced exile, to see the folly of his youthful excesses. He was now sixty years old, and lived in a little cottage on his own estate, about a mile and a half from the Towers ; with two maid-servants, a footman, and a stable lad to look after the one steady-going cob, which was now the sole representative of his once magnificent stud. His frugal table was supplied with fruit, vegetables, and game from the Towers gardens and preserves, which were carefully kept up, being looked upon by their economical proprietor as a valuable source of revenue. It was whispered, too, in Helsingham—but it may have been merely a bit of local scandal—that his lordship actually let off the Towers itself, as a show-place, for a certain annual stipend, to his own housekeeper, that stately dame taking, in return, the whole of the fees derivable from sightseers.

After all, the old lord's object was a laudable one : he hoped, by strict economy, to be able at his death to leave the estate to his son and heir unburdened by a single debt or mortgage. It was his way of repenting the follies of his youth ; and by no means a bad way, as the world goes.

He received Silas very kindly, and made him sit down opposite to him, and chatted away while he finished his late breakfast ; for he had been up since five o'clock looking after his farm-labourers, and was now engaged on a second matutinal meal. With a few insidious questions, he drew Silas out to speak of himself and his works, of his hopes and fears ; and it was really a fresh experience to the peer, to be able to enter so minutely into the inner life of one who had been born and bred in a sphere so much below that of his own. For the good breeding of Lord Borrowash quickly put Silas at his ease ; and sympathy and appreciation being two things to which he was utterly unaccustomed, the simple young fellow had laid bare his heart for his lordship's inspection before he knew what he was about.

"Undoubtedly, Mr. Ringe, you possess very considerable talent," said Lord Borrowash. "No one who has seen the specimens of your work which Van Noorden showed me the other day can doubt that fact ; and by the aid of that talent you ought to work your way upward in the world to a much higher position than the one you now occupy. Let me counsel you, however, not to pluck the immature

fruit. Do not allow yourself to be led away by any little local triumphs which you may achieve, but go on working quietly and patiently, and doing your best to improve yourself; and I doubt not that, in time, you will find a circle of admirers far larger and more appreciative than twenty little Helsinghams could ever offer you. I did not, however, get you here with the intention of doing nothing but sermonize. I am going to offer you a commission."

Silas's heart gave one great throb, and then stopped; not for his life could he have found a word to say at that supreme moment.

"Yes, I think that will be the most sensible way of showing my appreciation of your talents," resumed the peer, with a smile. "I want you, if you please, to execute a sideboard for me—not, indeed, that it will ever be made use of in my lifetime—a sideboard to fit into, and occupy, the space between the two end windows of the dining-saloon at White Towers. It must be made of oak, and I will send you the dimensions in the course of a few days. I have some wood at Chingay which will do excellently for the purpose, and I will have some proper pieces looked out, and sent to your address. Take as long a time for the work as you like; I am in no hurry; and as for terms, we will discuss them another time; I don't suppose we shall quarrel on that score. What say you to my proposition?"

Silas's tongue was loosened by this time, and he thanked Lord Borrowash in a few simple, feeling words.

"I have no wish to tie you down to any one form or design," resumed the peer. "Think the matter over for a few weeks, and then send me a sketch on paper—as roughly done as you please—of what you propose to do, and I will let you know how far it accords with my own ideas on the subject. Above all things, don't hurry the work; take ample time and do your best."

Lord Borrowash then rose and rang for Ranger to be brought round, and, jogging quietly along on his sober old cob, he accompanied Silas through the park and up the glorious avenue that leads to the east lodge, chatting pleasantly all the way, and bade him a cordial farewell at the gate.

And now, after the labour of twenty months, Silas Ringe's work was slowly growing in beauty and completeness. Each day saw some delicate touch added, some minute feature brought more clearly out, all tending towards the perfection of the whole; for Silas exhausted a world of patient labour in his efforts to make the work of his hands come up to the ideal standard of his brain, but was rarely more than half satisfied with the result. One or two hints had been thrown out by the peer that, should the work, when completed, prove worthy of such an honour, he should like it to be sent to the Great Exhibition, which was to be held in London in the course of a year or two, and about which all the world was now beginning to talk; and from that moment all Silas's ambitious dreams hinged themselves on such a glorious possibility.



With the exception of Van Noorden, who was privileged to come and go as often as he chose, and one other person, the workshop of Silas Ringe had very few visitors.

That other person was Esther Sarel.

## CHAPTER X.

### HUMBLE LOVES.

SILAS RINGE and Esther Sarel "kept company." With the origin and commencement of their courtship it is not necessary that we should concern ourselves here; it is sufficient to state that their engagement was about twelve months old at the time of which we write and that they loved each other very sincerely. Silas's commission for Lord Borrowash was undertaken before he made the acquaintance of Esther Sarel, and they had been engaged for three months before Silas said a word about it. Was Esther glad or sorry when, one evening in the spring of the year preceding that in which our story opens, as they were walking together through a country lane, made shady with the fresh greenery of May, Silas, with a burst of homely eloquence, told her he had already learned to love so well, the whole story of his inward life, without reserve or concealment—all his struggles in time past, and all his ambitious dreams, still cherished so fondly in secret, which the future was to turn into golden realities? Was Esther glad or sorry when she heard all this? I am disposed to think that, with a new sense of pride in Silas and his achievements, such as she had never felt before, there was mingled some shred of disappointment that the picture of a humble, happy home in time to come, when Silas should be her husband, which she had framed in her own thoughts, should be so rudely and suddenly thrust aside and another substituted in its place whose unfamiliar features she could not all at once accept as an equivalent for what she had lost. In engaging herself to this young carpenter, whose persuasive tongue and evident devotion had coaxed away her heart almost before she knew that she had lost it, she had looked contentedly forward to occupying the lowly position in life implied by such an union, and in none of her dreams had ever wandered beyond it. But, lo and behold! instead of finding that she had given her heart into the keeping of a good, commonplace young man, not overburdened with shrewdness, and with no particular energy of character about him—a man troubled with few mental processes beyond those connected with his plane and his saw; who never went to public-houses or evenings; who, when he had brought home his pound or five-and-twenty shillings at the week end, felt supremely content in the certainty that nothing more was expected from him; instead, I say, of having given her heart into such safe keeping, she found, to her intense surprise, somewhat, perhaps, to her dismay, that she had



entrusted it into the hands of a quite different sort of person. Was it not enough to startle any seriously-disposed young woman to hear her sweetheart burst suddenly into so strange a confession? Poor ignorant Esther hardly knew whether to laugh or cry. Had all this talk about the fame and fortune that the future was to bring—about the life in London above the reach of poverty, which was to be theirs in a few short years—any foundation in fact? or was it nothing more than the wild rhapsody of a self-deceived enthusiast? Then that jargon about “genius,” and “high art,” and “the sense of the beautiful,” and “harmony of design”—what did it all mean? Esther could make neither head nor tale of it. And that evident spurning of old ties and old associations; and that wilful trampling underfoot of everything likely in the slightest degree to stand in the way of his ambition—were these the signs of a healthy, honest striving to better his condition in life? If all these burning dreams should come true, might not the time also arrive when, among other relics of bygone days, he might learn to spurn her heart, and find the distance between himself and her too great to be bridged over by his love? But no—she would not wrong him by dwelling on such a thought; she hoped, and would try to believe, that everything would turn out for the best.

I am afraid that Silas was somewhat disappointed at the quiet and undemonstrative way in which Esther expressed herself respecting the sideboard, on her introduction to that piece of workmanship; but then, Esther Sarel was a girl who never went into raptures over anything, and that was a fact which Silas had yet to learn. “It is very nice, and very pretty,” said Esther, at a loss for words to express what she felt.

“‘Nice’ means namby-pamby, and ‘pretty’ is all bosh!” said moody Silas.

“Well, then, it’s grand,” said Esther resolutely. “I can’t find the proper words. And what a deal of patience you must have had to cut out these leaves so beautifully—ivy, and holly, and mistletoe; and that bunch of juniper berries, for all the world as if we could pluck them. And on this side, there’s the hop, and the vine, and the wild convolvulus, and all those delicate ferns; they are just wonderful. And all those dead birds, poor things! how natural they look! I know some of them, but not all. That’s a snipe; and that one a partridge; and that a pheasant; and I think that’s a quail—there was a picture of a quail in a book I had when a girl at home, and that is exactly like it. But, Silas, how did you ever contrive to make them look so soft and fluffy? I declare my fingers itch to pluck them. And that’s a squirrel, peeping out from among those leaves, with an oak-nut between his paws. What a cunning, frisky, little darling he looks!”

“But, judging the work as a whole, Esther, how do you like it?”

"It is beautiful—very, very beautiful, Silas! I hope it will bring you in a lot of money."

Silas sighed, and then smiled. He was only half satisfied. He had fondly imagined that Esther would look on his work with the same appreciative eyes that he himself regarded it; with the eyes of an artist, in fact, able to discern those higher excellences, such as would never strike a vulgar observer; and to appreciate the poetic and harmonious spirit which ran through the whole design. But Esther's artistic sense had never been cultivated beyond a liking for a simple picture that could tell its own story, or a pretty vase for the chimney-piece. Her genius was altogether practical and housewifely—the genius that makes a humble home comfortable and attractive, that knows how to cook a joint, and bake excellent bread, and make a husband's wages go the farthest; but beyond that point it was not safe for Esther to venture.

Silas had to be content to take Esther as she was. If she did not always follow him when he indulged in his rhapsodical, imaginative flights, she, at least, fully sympathized with him in his honest ambition to better his worldly condition; and was content to trust her future into his hands, and to go on loving him with that blind, unquestioning devotion which only a woman can feel, and not she always. And Silas, in his way, was very fond of Esther, and would steal away for an hour, two or three times a week, and go and wait outside the side door of Irongate House till she came out. Then, arm-in-arm, they would wander off, and talk over their little love affairs, and part with a kiss—perhaps more than one; and Esther would go back demurely into the house; and Silas would hurry back to do a couple of hours' work before going to bed. So their courtship progressed, and they agreed very well on the whole. They had little tiffs occasionally, as was only to be expected, considering the dissimilarity of their dispositions; for Silas was prejudiced and crotchety, and Esther had a spirit of her own—as every girl ought to have.

*(To be continued.)*



## IN THE LOTUS LAND.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "THROUGH HOLLAND,"  
"THE BRETONS AT HOME," ETC. ETC.



COPTIC WOMAN.

GRAPES did not grow in the streets of Alexandria. We could not stretch forth our hands and pluck them as we passed by. Apparently the Alexandrian muscats had no honour in their own country. It was not even the grape season, and whatever other luscious fruits the bazaars and market-places displayed, these had no place there.

It is certain that the greatest struggle for life we went through in Egypt was on first landing. A more motley crew than thronged the quays and swarmed our lower deck could scarcely be imagined. Seen from the upper deck, where, as we have already said, distance lent enchantment to the view, nothing could be more picturesque; but once amongst them, all charm and enchantment vanished. They seemed determined that we should land,

not in sound condition but in fragments. All the ten tribes, or sects of the various nations composing the population of this our Lotus Land, seemed here represented, and the number of costumes and different-coloured turbans was amazing to the uninitiated spectator.

Passing through the streets, it was impossible not to draw a mental contrast between modern and ancient Alexandria; between the city of the present, with its more or less commonplace aspect and influence, and the city founded by Alexander the Great three hundred years before the Christian Era. To-day the city is so Europeanized that you can scarcely fancy yourself in Egypt. It has wonderfully changed since the bombardment of 1882, and new streets and squares of palatial buildings have sprung up on the ruins of the old. What that bombardment was we realised to some extent when we visited many of the forts, that have never been restored, where exploded

shells lay about amidst fragments of solid masonry that nothing but the modern art of warfare could have razed to the ground.

It is only when you penetrate into the Arab quarters, or mark the swarthy visions and the Oriental costumes worn by the natives that you feel the Mediterranean really flows between you and Europe.

So we thought and felt on our way to the Hotel Khedivial. The hotel porter towered above the coachman like an animated pyramid. Every now and then he turned and looked down upon us with a benign expression of protection a little irritating to our sense of grown-up manhood, as if he felt that we were trophies plucked from the hands of the enemy, victims rescued from destruction. At length we stopped in front of a large building, somewhat sombre and dull-looking, and not very imposing. Our pyramid descended, and waiters and manager appeared on the scene.

It is much the most comfortable hotel in Alexandria, but, emphatically built for a warm climate, is not suited to the cold days and nights which sometimes come even to the Lotus Land. The staircases and passages were chiefly of stone; the bedrooms were large and bare; there was a grey, chilly aspect upon everything. In summer the coolness is no doubt delightful: but it was now winter, and unusually cold for Egypt. Where, indeed, did the winter of 1890-91 not penetrate to? Before we again left these shores, the road between Jaffa and Jerusalem was blocked up with snow and impassable, an event hitherto unheard of. The winter climate of Alexandria is not to be compared with that of Cairo. On the other hand it is far pleasanter in summer. Whilst Cairo is languishing under the scorching winds of the desert, Alexandria rejoices more or less in a constant supply of cool air from the sea.

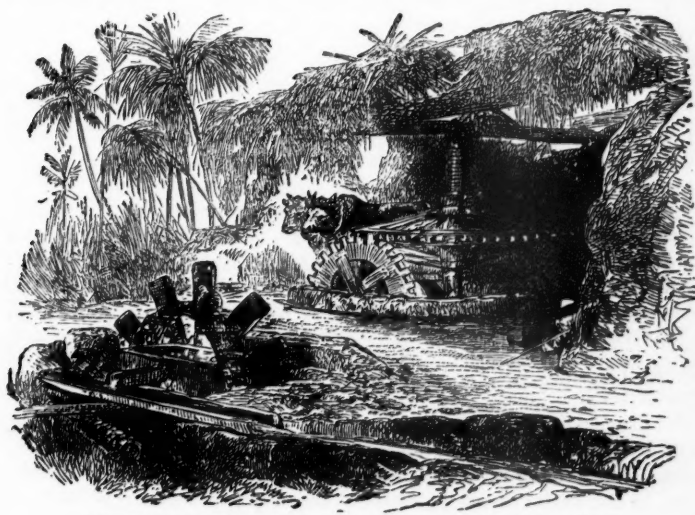
The dining-room of the hotel was a large building separated from the main structure. To make room for it they had evidently infringed upon the garden, which is now small, and given up to a few oriental trees, such as the banana and the palm—though the former is not strictly Egyptian—whilst a row of the cactus and the orange tree in large pots added their little charm to the scene. Above the surrounding houses the sky was as intensely blue, clear and bright as we only see it in an Eastern atmosphere.

How much we enjoyed the luxury of our first breakfast on shore let those realise who have gone through a similar experience. It is like returning to life and civilisation after the miseries and boredom and unrefinements of a close saloon: whilst to be freed from the perpetual motion of the sea seems like a return to Paradise. We scarcely realise the steadiness of our floors and tables, but thoroughly appreciate the whiteness of the linen, the well-polished silver, the excellency of the cook's artistic efforts. These were very good at the Hotel Khedivial. Like many of the hotels in Egypt, the custom is to charge each visitor so much a day, making no allowance for meals taken elsewhere: an arrangement very much in favour of themselves.

The daily charge at the Hotel Khedivial was sixteen shillings ; and it is very much the same in Cairo.

Very few travellers make more than a twenty-four hours' stay in Alexandria on first arriving. For a general impression of the town and neighbourhood this is sufficient. The greater number of people, indeed, arriving at Alexandria in the morning, take the afternoon train for Cairo, anxious to hasten on to that world's wonder—that world's fair, from an Egyptian point of view.

At the hotel we were at once met with the unpleasant intelligence that Cairo was full to overflowing ; no fresh arrival need attempt to proceed onwards without first having secured rooms. Egypt had



THE SAKIEH.—BUFFALOES DRAWING WATER FROM THE NILE.

never before been so crowded as this year. "We have had plagues of locusts, and we now have a swarm of Americans," remarked one of the hotel officials. Every berth in almost every returning vessel was taken for weeks to come. And still people were flocking in crowds and shoals to the Lotus Land, and still they came, for it seemed the only place within reasonable distance where winter could be forgotten. As yet the winter skies had been bright and blue and the air genial ; but fate decided that an Egyptian winter should begin on our arrival : a miserable sirocco arose : and they had it colder than it had been known for many years. Nevertheless, to us, coming from the barbarity of an English winter, it was difficult to understand the pinched faces and shivering forms, the furs and great coats that were so much in evidence and seemed so necessary ; and more than ever we were confirmed in the idea that to always winter abroad has

a weakening tendency. To us the skies were blue and bright, and the sunshine warm and dazzling.

To hear that Cairo was crowded gave us a shock from which we did not easily recover. If we had hoped for one thing more than another in going to the Lotus Land, it was that here we should escape from the rush and crowd of tourists that make travelling nowadays a sort of social warfare—little less than a species of inquisition to a sensitive temperament. We ought to have remembered that no spot of earth is sacred from the tourist; and that, whether we go to the top of the Great Pyramid or climb the summit of the Himalayas, we shall certainly hear American, and probably English, spoken. What else can happen if the inhabitants of the Great Continent come over in such frightful and persistent crowds to our smaller Continent? In Cairo it seemed to us that there were, at the very least, fifty Americans to one Englishman. The dahabeeahs going up the Nile to the First or Second Cataract were crowded, and the only cabins to be had for the remainder of the seasons were a few which accidentally became vacant: the places of those who, from illness or other causes, were prevented from carrying out their arrangements.

As the New World grows larger and our own Old World smaller, there will have to be a new departure—a new order of things—an international code drawn up by which the Americans will undertake to yield us quiet possession of our own on alternate years.

Of course there had been Americans on board travelling with us from Marseilles to Alexandria. They formed a large party, and filled up a whole table, and were all connected with each other by ties of birth or marriage. The ruling spirit of this party, a young lady dressed in satins and furs, was distinguished for her wonderfully black eyes and hair, and for a remarkable talent for making herself comfortable under all possible circumstances. All her dependants, in the shape of sisters, cousins and aunts, waited upon her as a courtier would wait upon his queen—equal devotion if not equal courtliness—and to do her justice, she repaid them with invariable smiles and amiability. But, to some ears the American manner of speaking English imposes a social gulf between the two nations far more difficult to bridge over than the Atlantic. The one, indeed, may be really accomplished; the other is impossible. Our fellow-travellers had transgressed in this matter as usual—rather more than usual; and Americans, as we know, have yet to learn that a modulated voice is quite as agreeable in man as in woman; but in all other ways they were neither aggressive nor unpleasant, and on the whole we had considered ourselves fortunate.

At breakfast, that first morning, at the Hotel Khedivial, we sat opposite to another American party, consisting of a mother, son and daughter. It would be rather complimenting the elder lady to suppose that she had made her fortune as a laundress; her appearance suggested nothing else. The son and daughter were a little more



refined in appearance, but had, without exception, the most unamiable faces ever seen. The daughter had commenced by not appearing at breakfast; and when it was half over, the son had reluctantly gone off in search of the truant. He had returned with the young lady, who followed him with "lingering steps and slow," and every token of annoyance and ill-will.

"Very strange I can't do as I like," she said, turning to her mother. "I don't want any breakfast, and now you've made me come down I sha'n't eat anything. You can't force me to eat."

"Then you'll be very stupid," retorted the mother. "I'm all for getting my money's worth out of people. It's included in the daily charge. Sixteen shillings a-day, and without wine, too. I call it imposition."

"Then why do you stop to be imposed upon?" snapped made-moiselle. "There are plenty of steamers going back to Europe."

"My love ——"

"Don't call me your love," interrupted the young lady. "I'm not your love. Pa was your love—at least I suppose he was, after a fashion. But it was funny love, such a cat and dog life as you led. *I'm* not your love—I'm only your daughter. I'll take good care never to be anybody's love. From all I've seen, you may just as well go into penal servitude as tie yourself up in the holy state of matrimony. Very holy, I must say."

"Hold your tongue, you wicked girl," reproved the mother. "A blessing for the man who would have married you if you never do enter the holy state of matrimony. You'd drive a saint into a madhouse with your temper and your goings-on. If ever I come to Europe again, it certainly won't be with you. I'd sooner stay at home first and confront a brazen serpent."

The lady evidently meant anything *but* a brazen serpent, but in the heat of retort she did not stay to weigh her words. It was not to be supposed that this interesting trio spent their days in cultivating this unfortunate tone of mind and conversation; life would soon have come to an end; but it was evident that amiability was not their strong point. For our own part, we saw them no more until long, long afterwards, when they, like ourselves, had turned their backs upon the Lotus Land.



FELLAH, MAKING ROPE.

We had stopped at a small station beyond Naples, on our way to Rome. The train was half empty ; everywhere there was abundance of room. Our compartment was composed of seven seats ; four on one side, three on the other. We occupied two seats, and two were taken by a German gentleman and his wife, very nice and quiet people. A fifth seat was taken up with our rugs and ulsters and a dressing portmanteau, which we had received special permission to keep under our own surveillance throughout Italy. Two seats were unoccupied.

No sooner had we stopped at the station than a town porter rushed across the line, tore open the door, and without even waiting to see how far the compartment was empty, hauled up these three identical people into the carriage, who had turned up again like the Eastern slippers, and then commenced throwing in their luggage. It is no exaggeration to say that there were fifteen or twenty packages, many of them of considerable size. Some were done up in dirty canvas or calico, and looked very much like the kit the sailor sometimes walks away with under his arm on returning from a long voyage. Mother and daughter sank into their seats, the son stood up literally embanked by his household gods. The train moved on, and it took him at least five minutes to stow and pile these away on every available spot above or below that the carriage contained. Then, having accomplished his task by a sort of miracle, he turned to us.

"And now, sir," said he, in that unpleasant tone which is more a command than a polite request, "if you will remove your coats and bag, I'll sit down."

"Will you tell us where to place them?" we returned. "You have taken up the whole compartment with your own affairs."

"I can't help that," he brusquely replied. "I must have that seat. In the first place, that bag is luggage ; you have no business with luggage in a carriage."

"Stop the train," growled the ex-laundress, "and have it put in the van. A pretty state of things if we're not to have seats to sit down upon in a free country."

We are not a Samson, and even had there been room, to have removed the bag would have been a difficult matter. But consideration was thrown away upon these impertinent people, who evidently looked upon politeness and civility as signs of weakness.

"We have special permission for this bag to travel in our own sight and keeping throughout Italy," we observed, "and it certainly shall not leave the carriage. But if you can see any spot not occupied with your own things in which to place it, you are at liberty to move it." Upon which we took refuge behind our paper and said no more.

"I am not a railway porter," he remarked, "and I am not going to remove other people's luggage for them." Nevertheless he began re-adjusting his own goods and chattels, and finally in some way disposed of our bag.

"This is shameful," cried the mother. "A pretty state of things to cross the Atlantic and make the grand tour, and all for nothing but to be turned into railway porters. I never was so insulted in my life. Why don't you stop the train and have it put into the van, Adolphus James? I insist upon your doing it. I won't travel with it."

The young man raised his hand as if to grope the alarm signal.

"You'll be fined five pounds if you do," cried the daughter in the very midst of a yawn. "And as you can't speak French or Italian and explain yourselves, the chances are you'll get locked up. I won't interpret for you. It serves you right. You should have found out whether there was room before you got in. And if you want all this rubbish with you just to save a few francs, you should have a compartment to yourselves. People really might think you take in washing, and had been going the rounds. Serves you right."

I am sorry to say that we distinctly heard the elder lady give expression to the vulgar word: "*Hussey!* I'll cut you off with a shilling in my will, if you don't mind what you're about. We're not going to be turned into railway porters for the King of Italy himself—and submit to it. I was *never* so insulted in my life."

All this time we had taken refuge behind our paper, and for all sign of consciousness might have been deaf and dumb. It was impossible to bandy words with such people. But it had at length become too much for the German's feelings, and he now spoke up.

"You are very rude, noisy people," he said, in very good English, though with a strong German accent. "I have never met anyone like you. We were quiet and peaceable until you came in. The train is half empty, and you might have taken another compartment. You have crowded this with such a cargo as I never saw in a carriage. In moving it about you have injured my wife's foot with your roughness. This gentleman, having received permission, has a perfect



OUR DRAGMAN.

right to have his valise in the carriage, and if you had rung the alarm you would only have been fined for your pains. Persons like you, who do not seem to study the conveniences of Society, should remain at home, or hire compartments all to themselves. You are not people, but bears."

Perhaps he went a little too far, but his extreme frankness had the desired effect. The lady was so astonished that for two minutes she remained open-mouthed; then prudence gained the day, and she took refuge in silence. The young man, finding himself in the minority, collapsed; whilst the daughter with another triumphant "Serve you right!" opened a Tauchnitz edition, and became absorbed in the last new novel.

A silence of ten minutes ensued: the mother and son looking very much as if they would like to blow up the whole train with gunpowder. Then the lady suddenly growled out: "I think we might have some refreshment." Upon which the son hauled down a huge bag from the netting, which looked capable of containing half a hundredweight, and without further ceremony, they began their feast. After reviving the old lady's spirits with a strong dose of brandy and water, they brought out three huge bones, from which they proceeded to tear the meat with their teeth, as if they had in truth been the bears the German had described them.

This was too much for human nature, and there are limits to the golden rule. The train fortunately stopped. We called up the guard, had our offending bag removed, and fled to an empty compartment and to peace and quietness. Our last glimpse of the strange trio revealed them gnawing at the three large bones, each bone firmly grasped in two hands: and we distinctly thought we heard three very bear-like growls. The German and his wife we never saw again, and we have often wondered whether they shared the fate of the bones.

These are the occasional incidents of modern travel. And though, as a rule, one happily escapes such pronounced aggressiveness, yet he who journeys far will meet with strange companions: whilst anything like refinement of thought and feeling will receive many a rude shock, that, as Monsieur M—— said at Concarneau, will make one appreciate more and more the repose and sanctity of home.

But to return to our Lotus Land.

We left this amiable trio disporting themselves at the breakfast-table, no threats of the mother on one side or commands of the brother on the other, inducing the refractory daughter to break her word and her fast. The day was before us in which to see Alexandria, and receive our first impressions of Egyptian life, its manners, customs and people.

The manager procured us a carriage and a dragoman. The latter is a necessary nuisance in Egypt, if you are a stranger to the Lotus Land. You had need be very careful how you engage them, and

the hotels will not always free you from their rapacity and imposition. Every step you take, every place you visit, seems a question of back-sheesh, which many of the dragomans will administer with a lavish hand.

Our own dragoman, whose name was Alek, was perhaps no worse than his fellows, but had one great fault: we engaged him for a week, taking him with us to Cairo, upon the plea that Cairo being so full, we should find it impossible to hire a respectable dragoman on the spot, and at the end of a fortnight we had not shaken him off. He seemed to have been a Jack-of-all-trades and amongst other things declared that he had served in the English army. He professed to be a devout follower of Mahomet, and had made a pilgrimage to Mecca, and after some further ceremony yet to come was to receive certain distinctions which would raise him into the front rank of dragomans and the faithful. He was somewhat above the middle height, and had the dark, swarthy, olive skin and black eyes of the Egyptian. His expression was a mixture of cunning and frankness that was very singular and a little difficult to analyse. It gave one the impression that the man had been born frank by nature, but that the struggle for existence and contact with his fellow men had gradually brought about a certain cunning and deceit which so often comes to those who, as the saying runs, "have to do the best for themselves." In Egypt it would be almost impossible to escape contamination.

Alek was the possessor of two wives, as he informed us. Apparently they were frightfully jealous of each other, and were almost always fighting and quarrelling. If he smiled upon one, the other was furious; if he frowned upon both, both turned upon him and he had a bad time of it.

"I have had about enough of it," he said to us one day, "and mean to send one of them back to her mother."

This was uttered just as if he had been speaking of a bale of goods or a piece of furniture; but it is a very ordinary matter in Egypt, where a man has only to declare himself divorced before a certain number of witnesses, and the fact is accomplished.

Alek's English was anything but perfect, and often unintelligible. In one particular he was like an Irishman, and would never confess ignorance of anything; rather than do so, would give you absolutely wrong information. When confronted with his error, he would declare that we had misunderstood him. But it took us some days to find out that Alek was more or less of a humbug, and that sometimes when he professed to be guiding us, it was little more than the blind leading the blind. Yet he was no worse than his fellows, and in some respects perhaps was rather better. Like so many of his class, he looked as if he and fresh water were on very unfriendly terms, an impression probably due only to the swarthiness of his skin; otherwise, in his Oriental dress he was a picturesque

object. He was very proud of the colour of his turban, and had an excellent opinion of himself altogether.

This was the dragoman who presented himself to us for hire. He was not attached to the hotel, but the manager knew something of him and declared him to be respectable. He spoke plausibly, showed us good certificates, and the bargain was concluded. We engaged him merely for the day. He mounted beside the coachman, and we went forth to see the wonders of Alexandria.

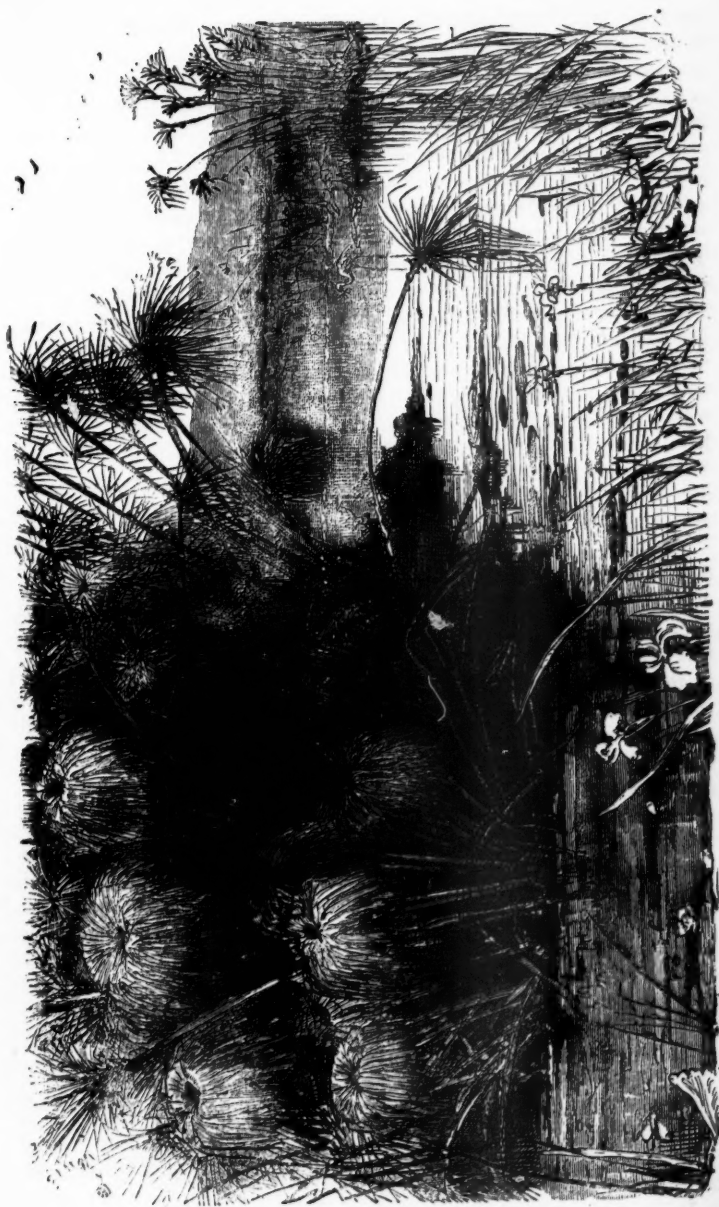
These are much less than they once were. Of all the ancient monuments only Pompey's Pillar remains as some testimony to its former greatness. We made straight for it on leaving the hotel. Passing out by the Gate of the Nile, we soon found ourselves in front of the pillar, which has stood the test of time for fifteen centuries, and is still very perfect. It is built of red granite, rests on a massive pedestal and is crowned by a Corinthian capital, now a good deal worn away, and never quite completed. The pillar stands out boldly and sharply against the background of clear Eastern sky, and is finely proportioned. The ancients were seldom wrong in their architecture.

The pillar stands on a desolate piece of ground: a slight hill covered with rubbish and fragments of ruins, emblem of the lost greatness of the city. All its surroundings are sad, for it overshadows an Arabian cemetery, where drooping figures in attitudes inexpressibly mournful may often be seen beside a newly-opened tomb. Their peculiar wail of sorrow can only be compared to an Irish wake intensified. But all who are howling are not sorrow-laden. When you meet a funeral in the street you notice that some of the howlers are young boys who, wailing and cutting capers, seem thoroughly enjoying their task. The more noise, the more honour to the dead.

There were many groups in the cemetery this morning: women veiled and bowed and men in mourning. One woman sat solitary and apart near a tomb that contained her husband, for she was robed as a widow and held a willow. Altogether she looked a very picturesque object in her abandonment of sorrow. Little could be seen of her features; her head drooped and she bent low, and the willow leaves stretched far above her in graceful curves. She was quite still and motionless, apparently in the depths of despair.

The whole aspect of the cemetery was desolate—almost repulsive. We hurried through it, for it seemed, to an awakened imagination, fever-haunted—plague-stricken. The Arabs form at once the poorest and most picturesque part of the population. Their quarter of the town is the most squalid and crowded. The streets are full of small Arab children, to whom little care seems given. Many are afflicted with ophthalmia; but where this is not the case their little black eyes flash out and light up their little copper faces, which are often running over with smiles as they run beside your carriage and hold





PAPYRUS, AS WE SAW IT GROWING AT SYRACUSE.

out their little hands with the inevitable cry of "Backsheesh." It is hard to resist them, and it must be wrong to yield to this first step towards the idle and vagabond life so many grow into. Perhaps time will change all this, and raise them to something higher and better. Alexandria has scarcely become accustomed to her prosperity. At the commencement of this century she had fallen into absolute decay, and her wealth seemed gone for ever. But Mohamet Ali arose, a mighty man in the land. He may be called the regenerator of Egypt, for to him she owes much of her present success. Alexandria may well in gratitude erect statues to his memory and call streets and squares by his name. He was the founder of the present dynasty, and established his reign by the murder of all the Memlook beys in the citadel of Cairo. Born at Cavala, in Roumelia, in 1768, he began his prosperous career in 1803, when colonel of an Albanian Corps in Egypt. He prospered in all he undertook; wherever he went he was successful; like Cæsar of ancient or Napoleon of modern days, he seemed born to conquer; and but for the intervention of the European Powers would probably have changed the whole fortunes of the East. If he was ambitious he was also wise, and Egypt has cause to be grateful to his memory.

Of the present prosperity of Alexandria there is little evidence in the Arab quarter. The streets are crowded and you hear many cries. The water-carrier is conspicuous, with his curious skin slung over his shoulders. The seller of sherbet finds his market even in this poverty-stricken quarter—for it is not so abjectly poor in fact as in appearance. It forms a wonderfully stirring and animated picture. The very air seems instinct with movement. The different costumes and colours give you a kaleidoscopic impression; everything about you seems shifting and changing. You are almost dazzled and bewildered by the crowd and the din. In the distance you see a denser cavalcade slowly approaching. It is an Arab funeral of the poorer description. A long sort of platform upon wheels is being drawn by a patient horse or mule. Upon this the very frail coffin reposes. Seated on the platform are men, women and children, cross-legged, drooping, half or wholly veiled. Their attitude is expressive of sorrow and mourning, though evidently many are not grief-stricken, for they are looking about them and there is no sorrow on their faces wherever these are visible. These funerals excite no curiosity or compassion in the people. They are too common an occurrence, for they may be seen every hour of every day. The quarter is crowded and people are always dying. As soon as possible after the breath leaves the body it is consigned to the tomb. Cemeteries abound. In one open spot we saw more coffin-laden, women-laden wagons waiting their turn than we could stay to count.

It is, perhaps, in this Arab quarter that you obtain your greatest impression of being amongst the Orientals. Yet in Alexandria

something is constantly bringing you back to Europe. As time goes on this will become more and more the case; the Eastern element will disappear like the antiquities, and Alexandria, so much in touch with Europe, will become altogether Europeanised. But two things she will ever retain—the palm tree and the camel: as inseparable from Egypt as her sandy deserts, her clear skies.

The shops or bazaars in the Arab quarter were curious, and scarcely resembled the bazaars in Cairo, that great Eastern institution, which we picture in imagination as so gorgeous and so wonderful—almost laden with the enchantments of the Arabian nights—but which is in reality so disappointing. The bazaars in Alexandria showed forth the usual amount of gold and glitter and tinsel; of filigree and morocco work; Eastern burnous and red slippers; Persian rugs and hookahs; every species of Arabian and Egyptian woodwork and needlework. This fine and curious embroidery is the only industrial art that has been handed down to Alexandria from the prosperity of her early days. It grew to the highest artistic perfection in the times of the Caliphs, and was renowned throughout the civilised world. The coronation mantle of the Roman-German Emperors—preserved in the Treasury at Vienna—was worked by Arabians. Venice in her glorious days sent to Alexandria for her choicest silks. All the gold thread used in such lavish quantities in the brilliant days of chivalry, came from the East; and the Orientals long preserved the secret of making it in the greatest perfection. None could compete with them. It was manufactured from the finely-divided threads of the intestines of animals, a process not then known to the world at large.

That this art of embroidery has survived where so much else has perished is not very surprising. It is a quiet labour, requiring no special bodily exertion, and is exactly suited to the Eastern temperament, which loves indolence and inactivity. The men may sit cross-legged in Turkish fashion upon their floors and counters, and earn their daily bread without moving the whole day long; excepting at the hour of prayer, when he will spread his carpet and commence his devotions with all those curious genuflections, all the apparent fervour, which is one of the striking and singular sights of the East. In the regularity of their devotions they set a good example to many a Christian community. The true follower of the Prophet would sooner miss his daily bread than omit his prayers.

The fruit stalls formed a large proportion of the Arab trading. One whole square was given up to them: booth after booth displaying luscious fruits and dried dates picturesquely arranged, behind which the dark-skinned, keen-eyed Oriental presided in fez or turban. Here in their season you will find an abundance of delicious grapes, from which also an excellent wine is made; oranges in unlimited quantities, the small, sweet-scented Mandarin and the wonderful citron sending forth their perfume upon the air. The latter is as

exquisite and delicate as it is fleeting. The pomegranate also abounds; and the apricot, which is flavourless. Figs are very common, and apples, pears, quinces, plums and the cactus fig. The banana has become a native of Egypt only within the last ten or fifteen years. All these fruits in their season are artistically displayed, and are relieved by the fresh date, which sometimes is deep blood-red in colour, sometimes a pale, sickly yellow, and always harsh and astringent in flavour. This, like all other parts of the Arabian quarter, was crowded. As we left the carriage and perambulated from stall to stall, we were followed by a tail of Oriental boys and men, who seemed to think we were only there for their own profit or amusement. Whenever they became too thronging, a few cuts from Alec's riding whip—which he always carried and used indiscriminately—dispersed them for the moment, but they retired only to return in greater force.

The donkey-boys were of course very much in evidence, with their long-suffering animals—an institution in Egypt quite as much as the palm tree and the camel. If you are walking they will follow you persistently in the hope of being hired at last, upon the principle that continual dropping will wear away a stone, and are only to be got rid of by a cut from a whip or a well applied knock on the head with a stick. Men and boys seem to submit to the lash as if they felt it no degradation and were insensible to pain. They take it as a matter of course. Often when, as the days went on, Alec belaboured the shoulders of a man bigger and broader than himself, with all his might and main, we expected to see a sudden access of wrath, and a blood-curdling encounter, the monster took it as meekly as a child, and without the slightest thought of retaliation.

One of the few industries of Alexandria is carried on in a narrow street at the back of the Mosque of Ibrahim. It is a dull, sad-looking thoroughfare, and seated in rows one after the other a large number of men are plaiting the reeds and rushes that grow in the marshes, and manipulating the fibres of the date-palm, turning the one into matting, the other into rope. It is quite a national industry; and though not handed down from antiquity like the fine needlework, no doubt the ancients made use of their willows quite as much as the moderns, and possibly in the same way. It is an interesting sight, and peculiar to Alexandria. You may also see—not in one particular spot, but in many parts of Alexandria and Cairo and the country roads, the natives sitting cross-legged behind rows of sugar canes, breaking the large cane over their heads, which apparently have as much resistance as an Irishman's skull; and then cutting up the broken cane in small pieces five or six inches long. This they peel and eat, and seem partly to live upon. It is sweet and sickly, and disagreeable to any one who has not acquired the taste. Sometimes a customer will buy a whole cane, and carry it off over his shoulder after the way of a fishing rod.

Passing out of one of the gates that morning, we suddenly came upon our first view of the Nile, and gazed upon it not without



EGYPTIAN GIRLS COMING TO THE NILE FOR WATER.

considerable emotion. How could it be otherwise with this ancient and classical river? Its religious history is no less interesting than

its secular. It is the river of the Old World, and its banks were teeming with life, prosperity and civilisation, great towns and magnificent buildings were in existence, when the other countries and rivers of the world were as yet unknown. No river has ever created so much interest, so much controversy, given rise to so much travel and exploration; no river has such wonderful remains, so many vestiges of a past existence, almost another world and a separate people. It has been worshiped as a deity, and Egypt itself has been called the Gift of the Nile. To it the country owes its fertility, and to this day it regulates its prosperity. The Nilometer at Alexandria is watched with the greatest anxiety, and when the waters sink to a certain level, the people cease to pay taxes. Its source long remained unknown and a mystery, and is still doubtful. Some say that it rises far up in the Victoria Nyanza lake, others that it springs into life yet further south of the equator.

It is here that the lotus—the “blue lily” of the Nile—grows in greatest perfection, and it is here that most emphatically we are in Lotus Land; for though the lotus now grows in other waters, it originally grew in Egypt and there only. Once the papyrus grew here, but grows no longer; this beautiful plant is only to be found in the pools and waters of Syracuse, where we have seen it bending over the stream in graceful curves and outlines.

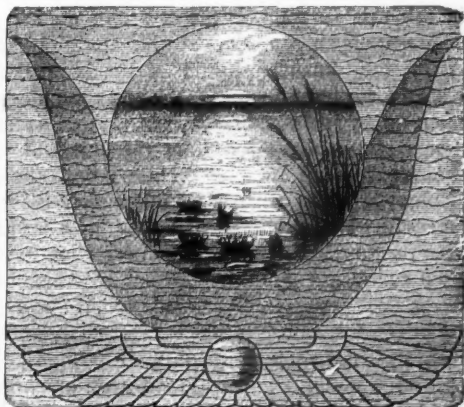
This morning we saw the river at its least interesting stage, from a classical and antiquarian point of view—where it is about to yield up its existence to the Mediterranean. A calm, broad-glowing stream reflecting the pale Eastern sky upon its surface, catching up the warm sunshine, and breaking it into a million flashes; giving no evidence of the turbulent cataract amongst the far off hills; the multitude of ruins and antiquities to be found upon its distant banks.

Here we saw nothing but a dahabeah or two moored to the banks, one of them belonging to the Khedive. Within a few feet a high dead wall was erected, and behind it was the Palace. Little of it could be seen; still less of the harem, where, in closely-sheltered gardens, well screened from the gaze of the world, the favourites, within doors and without, spend their monotonous existence. Well resigned to it, no doubt, as people generally are resigned to the lot which falls to them, with that fine spirit of adaptation that is one of man's greatest blessings. On the low-lying lands stretching far away on the opposite banks, there was little life and movement to be seen. A few palm trees stood out against the clear sky; and here and there a string of well-laden camels, the drivers seated upon their backs in cloak and turban, plodding patiently along with the swinging billowy movement so peculiar to them, reminded one, perhaps more forcibly than anything else, that we were on Eastern shores. Impossible, indeed, would it be to get on here without the camel. It is emphatically the beast of burden, and one day is flying along the desert, bearing its rider away from the approaching sandstorm,



which rises like a whirlwind, obscures the heavens and almost turns day into night ; and the next may be seen drawing the plough or turning a waterwheel, or passing along a canal path, laden with rushes and sugar-cane. It yields both milk and wool, and in short, adds much to the prosperity and well-being of its owner.

The European element was more in evidence when we passed through the Rosetta Gate to the fashionable drive and promenade of the Alexandrians, along the banks of the Mahmoodebyeh Canal. Here the rich people of Alexandria most do congregate, as in Paris they do in the Bois de Boulogne, or London in Rotten Row. Of late years the merchants have grown rich and great, and pride themselves upon their well-appointed equipages, which they purchase in Italy or Vienna, with their high-stepping horses. The ladies dress very gorgeously, and many a costume is made in Paris. With all this it is curious to see the black coachmen driving in a tarboosh or red Egyptian fez. The scene is altogether a strange mixture of Eastern and European manners and morals, but it is gay and lively, and gives one a good idea at a glance of the rich and fashionable population of Alexandria.



THE LOTUS.

Passing away from this, you will presently

reach the Isthmus separating the Island of Pharos from the mainland. Here exists the Jewish quarter ; and the Jews are as much in evidence in modern as in ancient Alexandria. To the East of this is the New Harbour, to the West, the Old. There is a good deal of colouring and artistic effect in the district, though many of the streets are narrow and poor and squalid, after the fashion of all Jewish quarters in all parts of the globe.

The situation is striking. Both the harbour and the town-proper of Alexandria present a lively aspect. In the bay, which is so exposed to the North, and so filled with sand that larger vessels cannot enter it, one notices the barges with their white sails spread, the points crossing and interlacing each other like the wings of some monstrous sea-bird. Beyond lies the blue shimmering Mediterranean, beautiful ever, though very different here from those waters that wash the shores of Naples, with all their magnificent surroundings ; where

Vesuvius casts his shadow and deepens the blue by day, and sends forth his tongues of flame by night; and Capri afar off looks like a dream mountain; and ruined monasteries, and deserted convents mark the times that have passed for ever in all that wonderful coast road which leads round by Sorrento.

Here in Alexandria the elements of interest were very different; nature had done little; modern enterprise and past tradition—to these one had to turn: and these existed in abundance. In place of monasteries, the religious element is here represented by mosques and Coptic convents, and a few modern Christian edifices that have no architectural interest about them.

Turning your back upon the far-stretching waters of the Mediterranean, upon the low-lying stretches of arid-looking shore, and re-entering the town, a slender minaret guides you to the mosque of the Sheykh Ibrahim, in the centre of a small square, where windows of Mashrebiyeh work arrest the attention, and you hear not very far off the din and traffic of the New Bazaar. The mosque is a large, Eastern-looking rectangular building. One whole side is taken up by small shops, where the Arab sellers sit cross-legged upon their counters, sheltered from the sun and the sirocco by matting awnings held up by long poles. Above the mosque is a Musulman theological college. An outside gallery is formed by small columns supporting iron arches surmounted by a wooden balustrade. Above rises the small minaret on which rests an hexagonal gallery, supporting a cylindrical column crowned by a small bulbous cupola bearing a crescent. At the narrow, somewhat decorated doorway, are seated the guardians, whose business it is to take off your shoes and replace them by straw slippers if you wish to enter. The sacred floors must not be trodden by unhallowed feet, or sullied by the dust of the streets. Many of these men are venerable-looking, with long grey beards, their dark faces wrinkled with the cares of a long life. They might be any age over a century, and look as if they were direct descendants of the Patriarchs. Here and there one would make a splendid representation of the Wandering Jew. Some of their faces are remarkably fine, possessing a wonderful mixture of the religious and intellectual elements.

Few of the mosques of Alexandria are worth more than a passing visit, and cannot be compared with those of Cairo. One of them is named the Mosque of the Thousand-and-one Columns, but, if they ever existed, many of them have long since disappeared. Here the Church of St. Mark once stood according to tradition, and here St. Mark is supposed to have suffered martyrdom. The church was destroyed in 1219 by the Moslems under Melek-el-Kamel, at the time that the Crusaders were besieging Damietta. The Moslems would not spare the church though tempted by large offers. The body of St. Mark was in the possession of the Coptic convent, and they still profess to have it; but according to Leo Africanus and the

historians of that date, it was undoubtedly carried off by the Venetians in the year 828. The fact is recorded on the mosaics of St. Mark's, Venice. The body was stolen by the two captains named Rusticus and Tribunus, with the help of Staurgius, a monk, and the priest Theodorus, who, having charge of the sanctuary of St. Mark's, Alexandria, must have been bribed thereto.

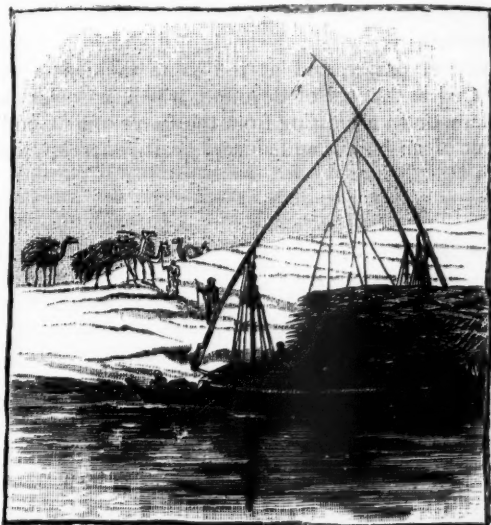
Close to the tomb of Said Pacha, which is worth visiting, is the mosque of Nebi-Daniel, crowned by a cupola. It is one of the most simple of all, with plain walls and small square windows. But in the centre of a subterranean vault is a magnificent tomb, which the people of Alexandria confidently declare contains the body of Daniel the Prophet. Nearly

all these mosques are built in the same style and with the same material: burnt brick of an excellent description, for which Lower Egypt is famous. All these materials come from Rosetta. The bricks, small and solid, are bound with a strong cement of mortar, a mixture of sand and lime.

Our dragoman, Alek, would have had us give a very cursory glance at these and all other

matters. He seemed possessed with the spirit of the modern tourist, and evidently thought general effect was what we ought to aim at; an examination into details was too laborious, too great a tax upon the mind. Every now and then, when something specially interesting detained our footsteps, he would take refuge in resignation. If within a mosque, he would wander away to the guardians and exasperate them by offering them the smallest possible amount of backsheesh, remaining absolutely deaf to their growls and remonstrances, which were often accompanied by flashing eyes and eager gestures, suggestive of daggers and scimitars. Or he would stroll outside, and send the donkey-boys flying with a cut of his whip, which, alas, fell in equal shares upon boy and animal.

As we have said, Alexandria was a strange mixture of the European



ON THE NILE.

and Eastern elements. The one was tame and commonplace enough ; the other was full of life and movement, of colouring and interest. A motley throng crowded the streets. The importunities of the donkey-boys, the strange figure of the water-bearer, the arduous labours of the road-sprinkler, the curious Eastern cry of the seller of sherbet, all contributed to form a scene that has no parallel in European climes. It was dazzling and bewildering, and presently one turned away from it all to the quiet, far-reaching waters of the Mediterranean with a feeling of rest and relief. There one gladly watched the golden sun dip and disappear beyond the horizon : watched the crimson afterglow throw its deep red tones upon all ; the flames that seemed to dart about the sky with such gorgeous effect, dyeing the white sails of the barges, and gilding the tops of the minarets within the walls of the town. This was the Mussulman's hour of prayer, and at the same moment thousands would be engaged in that act of devotion, which, however mistakenly offered, will draw down a blessing from the Giver of all Good upon all those who, out of an honest and sincere heart, offer up their worship according to their light.



## THE THIRD FINGER OF THE RIGHT HAND.

## I.

THE time was late autumn. All day there had been a dense fog in town (as my landlady's nephew brought word when he reached home from business), but it was not till well on in the afternoon that it spread outward and onward and gradually enfolded the pleasant London suburb in which I dwelt in its chill and stifling embrace. On such an evening a man might well be excused for hugging himself on the fact that he had no business to take him from home. It was a night for a rousing fire, for one's easiest chair and a favourite author—a night to shut oneself indoors, “the world forgetting, by the world forgot.”

At that time I, the Rev. William Heritage, was a young man of five-and-twenty, fresh from a country curacy, and all unused to London life and London ways. My stipend was something under a hundred pounds a year, and, as I had nothing beyond it to depend upon, my mode of living had perforce to be regulated on strictly economical principles.

My landlady's clock had just struck nine on the particular evening with which we are concerned, when a vehicle of some kind, which had come down the street at a walking pace, stopped opposite my lodgings, and half a minute later a thundering rat-a-tat startled everybody in the house, myself not least of any. Presently in came Mrs. Daly, evidently quite in a flutter. “There's a carriage-and-pair outside, sir,” she said, “with a coachman and a black footman, and a gentleman inside who wishes to speak with you.”

Wondering not a little, I put down my book and, taking one of the candles, passed through the folding-doors into my bedroom, where it was the work of a minute to exchange my slippers for a pair of shoes and my lounging-jacket for a garment more befitting my profession. Mrs. Daly stood holding the front door open as I went out. The fog was no longer quite so thick and stifling as it had been earlier in the evening.

Crossing the narrow strip of garden and the footpath beyond it, I found myself at the open window of a brougham. A little distance away by the side of the horses stood the black footman.

“You are the Rev. William Heritage, I presume,” said a man's voice, speaking to me out of the depths of the carriage.

“That is my name.”

“The services of your office are required at a country place a little distance away. If, therefore, you will come with me, I shall esteem it a favour. The brougham will bring you back after you

have done what is required of you, and you shall be liberally remunerated for your trouble."

"But, first of all, I should like to know ——"

"Pardon my interrupting you," broke in the stranger, "but the errand which has brought me here is one that admits of no delay. We can talk as we go along. For the present, is it not enough for you to be told that your services as a minister of religion are urgently needed?"

The words implied a rebuke, and as such I felt them. "I am at your service," I said, with a little bow. "In three minutes I shall be ready to accompany you."

And, indeed, it did not take me longer than that to put on my outdoor things, and tie a muffler round my throat as some slight protection against the fog. The black footman held open the door of the brougham and closed it upon me; a few seconds later the horses sprang forward, and by the time I had settled myself in my corner, Alma Terrace had been left behind and we were traversing one of those great arteries of traffic which from every point of the compass converge on the Great City.

"If you have no objection, I will put this window up," said my unknown companion as soon as we were fairly under way. "These confounded fogs are enough to try the strongest of us."

He had kept well back in the brougham even when he had first summoned me to speak with him, and all I had been able to make out, and that vaguely, was a pair of piercing eyes and a black bushy beard and moustache. Now that I was shut up with him in the carriage, he was wholly invisible to me, for the fog was still so thick that the street lamps were merely so many blurred splotches of yellow flame, dimly discernible for a moment and lost the next. On such a night the utmost caution was needed on the driver's part, and our progress was necessarily slow. By-and-by, we left the last of the metropolitan lamps behind us, and plunged blindly forward along the unlighted country road, and as from time to time we seemed to take a sharp turn to right or left, as the case might be, I judged that we had diverged from the great highway by which we had left London, and were now traversing one or other of the less frequented cross-roads which go to make up such a puzzling network to those who are unacquainted with them.

But by this time I was becoming not merely impatient, but uneasy. Since putting up the window my fellow-traveller had remained utterly silent. I had expected to be informed en route, not merely whither we were going, but for which particular office of the Church my ministrations were required; but not by a word did my companion break the dark silence between us. At length, the tension became such that I could bear it no longer. "Have we much farther to go?" I demanded, not, perhaps, without a touch of urgency in my voice.

Before answering me, my companion proceeded to rub the dim,



opaque surface of the window with the door-strap, and then leaning forward, he peered through it as if in search of some recognisable landmark. "Another half-hour ought to bring us to our destination," he presently remarked as he sank back into his corner.

This was so far satisfactory, but my curiosity was not appeased. "May I ask to be enlightened as to the particular purpose for which my services are needed?"

"Simply to read the Burial Service. For nothing more, I assure you."

"To read the Burial Service at this hour of the night!" I exclaimed in amazement.

"The necessities of the case are such as to override all subordinate considerations," he replied in a tone which seemed to repel further questioning.

Evidently there was nothing for me to do save to await the course of events and be guided by circumstances as they might arise.

After what seemed to me a much longer time than half an hour, but may not really have been so, the carriage came to a halt at what seemed to be the lodge entrance to a park. In any case, there was no one there to admit us, the footman having to descend and open the gate for the carriage to pass through. A further drive of five or six minutes along a smooth gravelled road, and then we came to a second and final halt.

The black servant opened the carriage door and my companion alighted. "Our journey is at an end, Mr. Heritage," he said; whereupon I proceeded to follow his example.

I noticed that the carriage had drawn up close to what looked like a side door, or servants' entrance, to some country mansion. Scarcely had my feet touched the ground before the door in question was opened from the inside, as though our arrival had been looked for, disclosing a dimly-lighted flagged passage, with great blotches of damp and mildew showing here and there on the walls. "This way, if you please," said my companion as he advanced into the house. The moment I had crossed the threshold the door was shut softly behind me. My guide led the way to a room at the end of the corridor. It was a chilly-looking apartment, with its uncarpeted floor and painted walls. Its sole furniture consisted of an antique oaken table with a couple of chairs to match. However, a cheerful fire was burning in the grate, and on the table was a tray with wine and other refreshments. The room was lighted by an oil-lamp, the wick of which was turned partly down, as, indeed, was that of the lamp in the corridor, but with what object I was at a loss to determine. "Will you kindly wait here for a few minutes and meanwhile help yourself to some refreshment?" said my companion. "You may rely upon it that I shall detain you as short a time as possible." With that he left me to myself.

My first act was to pour out a glass of sherry and my second to

plant myself with my back to the welcome fire. Not till we were in the room, and he was talking to me had I been in a position to have a fair look at my companion, and even then there was little about him which would have helped me to recognise him at any future time. He was tall and well-built, and wore a long fur-trimmed overcoat, the hood of which, after the Canadian fashion, was drawn over his head, leaving little of his features visible save the afore-mentioned piercing black eyes and bushy beard and moustache. In years gone by I had been a good deal mixed up with amateur theatricals, and as I stood there, balancing my glass of sherry, a certain conviction forced itself upon me, which was, that the beard and moustache worn by the man who had brought me there were false and merely assumed for the purpose of disguise. It was a conviction which by no means tended to reassure me, but, fixed as I was, it was impossible for me to draw back. All I could do was to quietly await the next act of the strange drama with which I had so unwittingly allowed myself to become mixed up.

Not long had I to wait. In something under ten minutes my conductor, so to call him, was back again. He had discarded his furred overcoat for a long black funereal-looking cloak, which, however, like the coat was hooded, so that nothing more of his features was visible now than had been before.

"Everything is in readiness," he said. "May I ask whether you have brought a Prayer-Book with you?"

"I did not omit to do so," was my reply.

"Then, if you will kindly follow me."

After traversing two or three dimly-lighted corridors without meeting anyone, we came to a glass door which my guide opened, and with that we found ourselves in the open air. The fog had lifted in part, but the night was still intensely dark.

"If you will permit me to lead you," said my companion, "it may save you the risk of a stumble."

So, hand in hand, we advanced slowly through the darkness. Here and there I could make out the forms, dimly outlined, of what I took to be clumps of evergreens, among which the path we were traversing wound in and out. Once or twice my guide paused, as if uncertain which particular turning was the right one.

"Here we are, at last," he said, after a few minutes, in an unmistakable tone of relief. "Be careful of the steps; there are exactly twelve of them."

Letting go my hand, he led the way. I hesitated for a moment, but for a moment only. It was too late to think of retreat, but it would still be competent for me to draw back at the last moment and refuse my services, should circumstances render it desirable that I should do so.

At the bottom of the flight of steps my guide pushed open a heavy low-browed door, and, holding it wide with one hand, motioned to

me with the other to enter. As I crossed the threshold a singular scene met my gaze. The place in which I now found myself was a low, vaulted structure, not more than eight or nine feet in height, and apparently of considerable antiquity—the small red bricks with which both the walls and roof were lined having acquired a worn and crumbling look, as if through the slow action of many years. In the middle of the vault stood a group of three people, all of whose eyes I could feel concentrate themselves upon me at the moment of my entry. All three figures were cloaked and hooded after the fashion of my conductor, but with the hoods drawn even more closely over their faces. One of them was a woman. Of the two men, one held a lighted lantern breast-high, another being near him on the ground. There was no other light than that given forth by the lanterns.

Laying a detaining hand on my arm, my companion whispered in my ear: "The burial for which your services are desired is about to take place here and now. The corpse is that of an infant—a male child—only a few weeks old. I hope you will not for a moment imagine that there has been any foul play, or that the child's death was due to other than natural causes. Such was not the case, I can solemnly assure you; indeed, were it needful to do so, I could adduce the medical certificate in proof of my statement. On the other hand, I at once admit that there are imperative family reasons why the death and burial should be kept a profound secret from the outside world. More than that, I feel sure, you will not ask me to say. I may, however, add, in case you may have any scruples on the point, that we are standing on consecrated ground—this being the crypt pertaining to a small private chapel, now in ruins, built some three or four centuries ago by the then lord of the manor. And now, come!"

We advanced towards the group of three, I carrying my hat in my hand. One of the two men, not he who held the lantern, greeted me with a silent bow. Through the folds of his hood I caught a glimpse of a long grizzled beard. Then the lady—for that she was such I could not doubt—favoured me with a grave obeisance. Upon that I became aware that we were standing round a small grave which had been dug in the earthen floor of the crypt, and on craning forward, I saw that a tiny coffin of polished wood had been lowered into it, but that the name-plate, if there was one, was hidden by flowers.

All being evidently in readiness, I took the Prayer-Book out of my pocket, opened it and began to read that most beautiful of services. I had taken up a position at the head of the grave and close by the man with the lantern, and the light shone on my book—not that I needed it, knowing as I did, the service by heart. My voice was the only sound that broke the silence, save that now and again a stifled sob broke from the cloaked lady, who had gone down on her knees by the side of the grave at the moment I began to read.

The service went on ; the solemn words, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," had just been pronounced, in response to which the man at my side had sprinkled a little earth on the coffin, when the door of the crypt was pushed suddenly open and another cloaked and hooded figure, that of a female, came swiftly forward and sank on her knees by the side of the other.

"Judith!" exclaimed he of the grizzled beard, in a tone of stern displeasure, as he made a step forward and gripped the newcomer by the shoulder. Then he threw a quick glance at me as though annoyed that the name should unwittingly have escaped his lips.

"Oh, papa, forgive me!" she exclaimed. "I could not help coming; indeed I could not. He was mine—my own—and he has gone from me for ever!" She lifted her head, as if in appeal, to her father, and as she did so her hood fell back for a moment, leaving displayed a pale but very beautiful face, of a somewhat Jewish type, of which the large black eyes were just now streaming with tears.

With an exclamation of annoyance the man drew the hood forward into its place. "So be it," he said, in harsh accents; "but there must be no scene, remember." Then he fell back and motioned me to proceed with the interrupted service.

A few minutes later and the last "Amen" was pronounced. I shut up the Prayer-Book, put it back into my pocket, and took up my hat, which I had deposited beside me on the floor. All this time the newcomer had only succeeded in controlling her emotion by a supreme effort, as she knelt there, with drawn-up shoulders, her slender fingers spasmodically interlocking and unlocking themselves again and again, but by no other sign betrayed the tempest at work within.

"Sir, I thank you with all my heart," said the elder man. "Pray oblige me by accepting the enclosed," and with that he pressed an envelope into my hand. A few minutes later I was back at the carriage. "If you will take my advice, Mr. Heritage," said my conductor at parting, "you will never say a word to anyone of the events of to-night." With which he shook hands with me and bade me a cordial farewell.

## II.

YEARS passed—a number—till the events in connection with that foggy night had so far receded into the past, that whenever, by any chance, they recurred to my memory, they seemed to have scarcely more substantiality than a dream. I had sought for no clue to the mystery and none had ever been forthcoming. It was an episode which had ended with itself, entailing (so I ignorantly imagined) no after-consequences likely in any way to affect me. Meanwhile promotion had come to me. I had been appointed to the incumbency of a church in the West of England, had married, and was blessed with one daughter.

On a certain autumn morning I found myself, in company with a

friend, on board the Rhine steamer, bound from Biberich to Cologne. After taking stock of our fellow-passengers, Maxwell and I settled ourselves on a couple of camp-stools, prepared to enjoy to the full the lovely panorama which was gradually unfolding itself before us. Some time had passed thus when I was startled by hearing a male voice behind me say, "Judith, my dear, are you quite sure that you are sufficiently wrapped up?"

It was a name I had never heard spoken since that memorable foggy night, and the mention of it thus unexpectedly brought back the whole scene vividly to my mind. It was impossible not to wish to see the Judith who had been thus addressed.

After waiting a few seconds, I turned on my camp-stool on the pretence of giving a last look at a certain ruined castle which we had passed a minute or two before, and found myself confronted by a very beautiful woman, who, in company with a military-looking man much older than herself, was seated a little distance away. The movement on my part drew her eyes to me. Her gaze, which at first had traversed my features as indifferently as it might have done those of anyone who was an utter stranger to her, returned to my face after a moment or two with a sort of puzzled inquiry in its regard, and then, after considering me for a little while, a sudden light of recognition flashed into her dark eyes, and the same instant she dropped her veil and turned to address her companion. If I had been in any doubt before as to the personality of the beautiful stranger, that flash of recognition on her part would have effectually dispelled it. But even without that I should have known her again; for the woman whom I had seen for a little while under such strange circumstances so many years before—the Judith of that night—had a right hand, the third and fourth fingers of which, owing to some curious freak of nature, were exactly the same length, and the right hand of this other Judith on the Rhine steamer, which for some reason or other was just then ungloved, had the same singular peculiarity. It was impossible to doubt that they were one and the same person. I at once turned away and was careful not to look in her direction again; but if I were to say that I did not feel a strong desire to fathom the secret of her identity, I should be stating what was not true. As already remarked, the destination of myself and friend was Cologne, but a number of our fellow-passengers were going no further than Coblenz, among them being the military-looking gentleman and his companion—wife or daughter, I was at a loss to tell which. As the steamer slackened way, they pressed forward among the rest who were preparing to land. Judith—I knew her by no other name—still had her veil down, and I noticed that she never once seemed to glance in my direction.

Pointing the two out to Maxwell, I expressed to him my wish to find out who they were. As a consequence, he rose and went forward with the crowd. At the end of five minutes he was back.



"Name on portmanteau, Lord Elvedon; name on trunk, Lady Elvedon," he remarked sententiously as he resumed his seat.

One of the first things I did after reaching home a fortnight later, was to write to a certain nephew of mine in the Civil Service, who went a good deal into society, asking him to ascertain for me who Lady Elvedon was before her marriage. The answer came in the course of a few posts. Judith Catherine, Lady Elvedon, was a daughter of the late Mr. Cornelius Dixwade, who had been a partner in a well-known firm of metropolitan bankers. On referring to *Debrett*, I found that Lord Elvedon was at that time in his fifty-fifth year; also that he had no son to succeed to the title and estates.

Something I had learnt, but not much; and certainly I was far from expecting that a third and last chapter of my early romance, if I may call it so, had yet to unfold itself. But so it was.

### III.

THERE was again a lapse of some years, in the course of which I had removed to London, where I was now the rector of a Church in the suburbs. It so fell out that my daughter, who by this time was eighteen years old, was desirous of being photographed, and with that end in view, beguiled me one day into taking her to a certain studio of repute at the West-end. There we were waited upon by a particularly handsome young man; and in due course, a couple of successful negatives were secured. Some two or three weeks later the portraits came home, and my wife's sister, who was staying on a visit, was so pleased with them that nothing less would satisfy her than being herself photographed at the same place. Accordingly, taking my daughter with her, she set out the next fine forenoon for the studio.

The day's experiences were talked over at dinner, and it was then that I banteringly asked Milly whether the same handsome young fellow who took her portrait had taken that of her aunt. Milly's response was a blush and an inquiry—which indirectly answered my question—whether I had noticed a peculiar malformation, so to call it, of the right hand of the young man in question. No, I replied, I had noticed nothing of the kind. Then it came out that the peculiarity to which she referred lay in the fact of the third and fourth fingers of his right hand being exactly the same length. I was far more struck by what she thus told me than she had any notion of. Never, save in the case of Judith, Lady Elvedon, had I met with, or heard of, a hand formed after a similar fashion. So much and so frequently did my thoughts dwell on the matter, that at length I decided to pay the young photographer another visit, and satisfy myself with my own eyes that his hand was really shaped as my daughter averred it to be. In order to do this, an excuse of some kind was needed. The readiest and most straightforward one that I could think of was to go and be photographed in propria persona.



Well, I went, and was duly posed and focussed by my young friend, who, I found, had by no means forgotten the occasion of my previous visit. Having satisfied myself that what my daughter had said about his hand was strictly the fact, my next object was to elicit from him some particulars about himself. This I had not much difficulty in doing, although there was a certain air of reserve about him, but it may have been in some measure owing to my cloth that he answered my questions as frankly as he did. (He has told me since that there was another reason, of the existence of which, however, I had not the slightest suspicion at the time.) When I left him I was in possession of the following facts connected with his history: His name was Bruce Warren. His parents had emigrated when he was a few months old, and he had been brought up in the States. His father had died about a year before, and he and his mother had then returned to England. As for the strange formation of his hand—he had been born so, but he was certainly not aware that any member of the family, either on his father or mother's side, was marked by a similar peculiarity. I had sought the information without having any definite object in doing so, and now that I had got it, I could not see that it was likely to be of any value to me.

One thing, however, it served to do—it turned my thoughts to Lady Elvedon, who had been in them but rarely of late years, and brought back, as freshly as if they had happened only the day before, every little feature and incident of my two meetings with her. Then, all at once, I made up my mind to seek an interview with her ladyship. I had read in the newspaper an account of the death of her husband about two years before, and through other channels I had heard that she was very wealthy and was noted for her extensive charities. At that time I was deeply interested in pushing forward a certain charitable scheme, and I said to myself, "Why not call upon the countess, and try to secure her name as a lady patroness?" Next day saw me at Trevanion Square.

Her ladyship received me very graciously, and after listening to what I had to say, at once acceded to my wishes in the affair. She was still very beautiful, but worn and sad-looking, and was dressed in deep mourning. Did she recognise me, or did she not? I asked myself, for her manner told me nothing. It was a point, however, as to which I was not long to be left in doubt.

"Are you quite sure, Mr. Heritage," she said, with a faint but meaningful smile as I rose to take my leave, "that the furtherance of your charitable scheme is the only object which has brought you to Trevanion Square to-day?" Then, without waiting for a reply to her question, she continued: "I recognised you at once, although I have not seen you since that day when we accidentally encountered each other on board the Rhine steamer."

"But your ladyship had seen me before that day, or you would not have recognised me then."

"Yes: neither you nor I can ever forget where and how we first met. But although it was natural enough that I should know you again, I have often puzzled myself with trying to guess how you came to know me, for, if you remember, on the occasion of our first meeting I wore a hood which almost wholly hid my face."

"The hood slipped back for a moment and allowed me a brief glimpse of your ladyship's features. Then, again, your father addressed you as 'Judith,' and I heard Lord Elvedon, as I presume him to have been, call you by the same name on board the steamer. Furthermore, if your ladyship will pardon my allusion to it, I recognised you again by a certain peculiar formation of your right hand."

"Ah, yes, to be sure. It was very stupid of me never to have counted on that probability, but I have grown so used to my hand being as it is, that I scarcely ever think of it as being different from the hands of other people."

"It is somewhat singular that only the other day I should have met with a person whose right hand is fashioned in the same way as your ladyship's."

"Such a coincidence is not merely somewhat singular, but very extraordinary. It is the first time I have ever heard of such a thing. If I may be allowed to ask, who and what is the person in question?"

"By profession he is a photographer—a very handsome and gentlemanly young fellow—and his name is Bruce Warren."

"Bruce Warren!" gasped her ladyship, with a look which made me fear she was about to faint. I was on the point of ringing the bell, but she motioned me not to do so. "And you say that this young man's right hand is framed after the fashion of mine?" she said presently, with a sort of questioning wonder in her voice. I bowed gravely in assent. "It is strange—it is very strange," she murmured. "And the name, too! Can it be nothing more than an extraordinary coincidence, or can it be that——" She left the sentence unfinished, whilst an inward shiver seemed to run through her.

There was a little space of silence, and then her ladyship spoke again. "I must see this young man, Mr. Heritage. It is absolutely essential to my peace of mind that I should do so. Can you not make some excuse for calling on him again and take me with you? Only, if I accompany you, he must not be told who I am, nor anything about me."

"That is a matter of easy arrangement," I replied. "All that is needed is that I should call at the studio again on the plea of wishing to be photographed in a different style."

Accordingly, before I left it was arranged that I should be at Trevanion Square at eleven o'clock the following morning, when her ladyship would be in readiness to accompany me to the photographer's.

I was there punctually on the stroke of the hour, and five minutes

later we were on our way in an unpretentious brougham, which had nothing about it that would furnish a clue to the rank of its owner. Said her ladyship to me : "What I should like you to ascertain for me, if you can contrive to do so, is whether the name of the young man's father was Jabez Warren, and if so, whether he, the father, was not, many years ago, head keeper at a place called Dunwithie Chase, a large property in Midlandshire."

Lady Elvedon's hand was resting on my arm as we were ushered into the studio. Young Warren came forward to receive us, and the moment her eyes rested on his face, I could feel her begin to tremble in every limb. But a veil hid her features, and I hastened to find a seat for her.

As I went on to explain to Warren the reason which had taken me there again, I had a consciousness that from behind her veil her ladyship's eyes were scanning him keenly. As it happened, no one was there but ourselves, and my sitting was soon over. It was not till Warren emerged from the dark chamber into which he had hurried with the negative that I said to him : "You will, I am sure, pardon my inquisitiveness when I assure you that it is not dictated by idle curiosity," and thereupon I proceeded to question him with the view of eliciting the information required by her ladyship.

The young fellow drew himself up, a little proudly as it seemed to me, and it was with a touch of heightened colour that he said : "My father's name *was* Jabez Warren, and the position mentioned by you was that which, as I have been told, he occupied up to the time he emigrated to the States."

"And your mother's baptismal name is Charlotte, is it not ?" said her ladyship, with a sort of wistful eagerness in her tone. They were the first words she had spoken since entering the room.

"That is my mother's name, madame."

Then her ladyship stood up and lifted her veil. For a few seconds the two confronted each other in silence. In the eyes of one I read nothing but surprise and frank admiration, but in those of the other there was a look which, at the time, I was utterly at a loss to fathom. Then, as my own gaze went from face to face, a certain possibility flashed across my mind, a possibility so wild and strange that for the moment it turned me dizzy. Then her ladyship spoke.

"I am the Countess of Elvedon," she said. "I knew your mother many years ago, before she left England. I have a very strong motive for wishing to see her again now that, as I have been given to understand, she has returned. Will you not oblige me with her address ?"

"Certainly, madame. I should be failing in my duty to my mother not to do so."

A few minutes later her ladyship and I were on our way to the address at Hammersmith with which Bruce Warren had furnished us. "I hope you will not object to my leaving you for a short time,"

said her ladyship as the brougham drew up at the door of an unpretentious, semi-detached villa of the ordinary suburban type. "I will endeavour to make my stay as brief as possible." That she was in an exceedingly nervous and highly-strung condition was plainly evident. As a matter of course, I begged that she would in no way shorten her visit on my account. The footman, meanwhile, had ascertained that Mrs. Warren was at home and her ladyship now alighted and went indoors.

She was gone a little more than half-an-hour. When she rejoined me her veil was again lowered. "Home," she said to the footman, as he held open the door of the brougham. We drove back to Trevanion Square in silence.

"You must come indoors, Mr. Heritage," said her ladyship at our journey's end. "I have much to tell you."

Needless to say my curiosity had been greatly excited by the morning's proceedings, and as her ladyship's words seemed to point to a probability of enlightenment I gladly complied with her request.

"The circumstances attendant on our first strange meeting in the old crypt so many years ago," began Lady Elvedon, when we were seated together in the drawing-room, "must often, I doubt not, have dwelt in your afterthoughts, accompanied by a wish that you could find a key to them. At length the time has come when what has hitherto been a mystery to you, need be one no longer; indeed, an explanation is due to you for more reasons than you are aware of. Besides which, I am quite sure that what I am about to tell you will be held as sacred by you in the future as that which you have known in the past has been."

What Lady Elvedon had to tell me in the course of our interview must be set down here as briefly as may be.

Lady Elvedon, as the reader is already aware, was the daughter of Mr. Dixwade, a wealthy London banker. It was in the course of her first season that Lord Elvedon was introduced to her and although he was undoubtedly much taken by her, the season came to an end without any proposal on his part. In the course of the ensuing winter Miss Dixwade paid a lengthy visit to an aunt in Scotland. While there she fell in love with a certain Lieutenant Bruce Abrey, who, on his part, was equally enamoured of her. The result was a secret marriage after the fashion which is still held to be valid in Scotch law. Three weeks later Lieutenant Abrey was ordered abroad with his regiment and presently Miss Dixwade, as she was still believed to be, went back to her home in the south.

At the first party to which she went after her return, she again met Lord Elvedon. That his lordship had by no means forgotten her was proved next day when he called upon the banker and made a formal offer of marriage. Mr. Dixwade's most ambitious dreams seemed on the eve of realisation, and to simply say that he was astounded when his daughter told him it was impossible that she

should become Lady Elvedon, is but faintly to shadow his state of mind. Then, under pressure, the truth was told. On the scene that followed, we need not dwell.

Some two years before this, the banker had bought Dunwithie Chase, the former home of an old but decayed family, together with the grounds appertaining thereto. Since that time the house had stood empty, except for a caretaker and his wife, and it was there that in an access of rage Mr. Dixwade now sent the daughter, who, to use his own language, had "irretrievably disgraced herself and him." There she remained immured till her child was born, the secret being known only to the girl's parents, to her brother, to two or three old and tried servants, and to the family doctor.

Within a month after the birth of the child, a letter bearing a foreign postmark and addressed to Miss Dixwade, which had been sent on from London, was received at the Chase. Under the circumstances the banker took upon himself to open it. It proved to be an announcement of the death of Lieutenant Abrey, who had been mortally wounded in action, and had died two days later, but not till after he had dictated to a comrade a last message to be despatched to his wife when all was over. The shock of the news proved too much for Judith, who was still very weak and ill. For several days to come she was delirious. When her senses came back to her she was told that her child was dead. In reality, her own child was still alive. The child at whom she was allowed to take a farewell look as it lay in its coffin, being that of Jabez Warren, the head keeper, whose birth had been almost coincident with that of her own.

Mrs. Dixwade, the banker's wife, was a woman of strong religious convictions, whom nothing would have induced to sanction the cruel deception which her husband, in furtherance of his own ambitious ends, and with the help of his son, conceived and carried out without compunction. In the full belief that the dead infant was her daughter's, Mrs. Dixwade insisted that the burial should take place in consecrated ground, and with the customary religious rites, nor from that point could anything move her. To this fact was due the summons which took me to Dunwithie Chase on that never-to-be-forgotten foggy night.

Time went on, and Judith's wounds began slowly to heal over. She went abroad with her mother, and when she came back, a year later, the ever-faithful Lord Elvedon proposed for the second time, and was accepted. As Judith said to herself: the husband of her love was dead, her child was dead, and all the happiness was gone out of her life; if her marriage would gratify her father and tend to make an estimable man happy, why should she allow her own feelings to stand in the way of her doing so? But not till the story of her first marriage had been told to Lord Elvedon would she consent to become his wife. Happily his constancy proved equal to the test.

She never regretted her marriage, she told me. Time brought with it no diminution in her husband's affection for her; and, in the course of years, that subdued happiness came to her which, as reasonable beings, is, perhaps, as much as any of us have a right to expect in this world of change.

It was the mention to her of my having accidentally encountered a young man whose right hand was shaped similarly to her own, coupled with the fact of his name being Bruce Warren, which not merely re-opened in her heart a wound which, as she thought, had been healed for ever, but caused a strange wild hope to spring to life in her bosom, from the full contemplation of which she shrank in fear and trembling, so much did it dazzle her mental retina. But it was impossible that she should sit quietly down and leave unsolved a mystery which, for aught she knew, might vitally affect her. Hence her visit to the studio and subsequent interview with Mrs. Warren.

In Lady Elvedon the head keeper's widow at once recognised the "Miss Judith" of those far-away days at Dunwithie Chase, and it needed but little to induce her to reveal all she knew with regard to the nefarious plot of which the banker's daughter had been the victim. As a matter of course, Jabez Warren, who for some time had been desirous of emigrating, was liberally remunerated by Mr. Dixwade for his share in the affair.

Lady Elvedon had found her son—he had come back to her, as it were, from the tomb—and in so far she had garnered a measure of happiness which sufficed to fill her long-empty heart almost to overflowing. But the widow of the Earl of Elvedon was a personage of note, and for the sake of the name she bore, it was deemed best that the details of her romantic story should not be told to the world—that little world of Society which is so censorious and prone to regard with suspicion, and worse, anyone whose feet have ever strayed beyond the narrow line of demarcation within which its votaries are expected to confine themselves, or, if they fail to do so, to guard the fatal knowledge as a secret which must never be divulged. When, therefore, it became known that the Dowager Lady Elvedon had chosen to adopt a handsome young photographer—an American by birth—as her probable heir, Society merely shrugged its shoulders and set down the act as a further proof of eccentricity on the part of a childless woman who had more money than she knew what to do with.

You will not think it strange, perhaps, that Bruce Abrey (as he is now called) and I see a great deal of each other, when I tell you that he is my son-in-law.



## A CHURCH WINDOW.

NOT a stately-painted window  
 All ablaze with red and gold,  
 Full of high symbolic meaning,  
 Telling tales of days of old.

Nothing to excite the fancy  
 Or to charm the artist eye,  
 Naught but dust and damp and mildew,  
 Shutting out the glad blue sky.

No fantastic trceries dainty  
 Circling lights of mystic form ;  
 Only diamond panes, bespattered  
 With the drift of many a storm.

Yet this misty old church window  
 Conjures up in fair array  
 Scenes of beauty, gorgeous pageants,  
 Glittering in the noon-tide ray.

Noon-tide ray of childhood's visions—  
 Were they real or only dreams ?  
 Looking back, each in its brightness  
 Than the rest more lovely seems.

Fact and fancy sweetly blending—  
 What was there, what seemed to be,  
 And this unstained transept window  
 Brings back all the past to me—

When a little maid, on Sundays,  
 Seated in the gloomy aisle,  
 Gazing round on walls and tablets,  
 Fairy-land I trod the while.

Once again I see the galleries,  
 Curtained pews and pulpit grim,  
 And the great brass candelabrum,  
 And the casements bare and dim.

And a flood-tide of dear memories  
 Drowns the interests of to-day ;  
 I am not a grave-grown woman  
 But a careless child at play.

E. RHODES.

## THE MASQUERADE BALL.

BY ADA M. TROTTER.

EVERYONE agreed that the suggested mode of celebrating Hallow-e'en by a Masquerade Ball was just as nice as it could be, yet the announcement left many young faces not a little perturbed, even anxious.

For we at our College out west boast a hard-working constituency; but our strong point is certainly not over-full purses.

Notwithstanding this limitation, we girls were bent on a judicious mixture of missionary work with our fun this year. Our College is established on the co-education basis, and the boys certainly did "cut up" last Hallow-e'en disgracefully, making it uncomfortable for professors and students for a long time afterwards. So this year, you see, we girls made up our minds to do something to entertain them and keep them from indulging their mischievous proclivities. Of course, we can't understand where the fun comes in of the stupid things boy students do on Hallow-e'en, but we *do* want to stop it if we can, and that was the reason why we made up our minds to celebrate it with a Masquerade Ball this year.

The boys were in raptures at the idea, and set about hiring costumes for the great event. Some of the richer girls did the same, but as for us—well, we had no money, and at first sight it simply meant being shut out from the whole thing.

Of course, as misery loves company, we all met disconsolate in Loeta's room. If anyone could console us it would be Loeta, but to our surprise she did not attempt anything of the sort. She and Addie, the bright Kansas girl, looked as gay as robins, and "What are you going to be?" became a mutual interchange.

We sat round the room, Loeta smiling on us from her perch on the window ledge. The twins, big young women of twenty-one, cast hopeful glances in her direction. As they said, "It was worse for them than for the rest, for they were two, not one, but had only one purse between them; the contents of said purse when raked fore and aft producing only one dollar."

How could *two* masquerade dresses be bought for one dollar?

Kitty Pringle, however, was worse off still, for she laughingly produced five cents as her all for immediate current coin.

"One can hardly go far astray on five cents," was her somewhat rueful remark.

Kitty, like the rest of us, was working her way through College; so when this is considered, it will be readily understood that the time to spare for getting up a ball costume on odds and ends was scant

enough. I can tell you, we girls who work our way through College *want* education!

But to go back to Loeta's room. Addie, our inspiration, was not the least put out at the empty purses displayed before her.

"Of course we shall all go to the ball, and of course we shall get up dresses somehow," said she cheerily. "You," to the twins, Maggie and Bessie, "are the only ones with money to spend. I consider a dollar riches. The rest of us must manage by borrowing one thing and another. We've all got something we can lend one another. Loeta here must be a nun. That won't cost anything, just a long cloak, a shirt-front and a veil. That's easy enough. But now for the rest of us."

Her quick eye, travelling round the room, lighted upon Loeta's curtains, drawn over her bookshelf, a dark, rich red.

"Just the thing for draping," she exclaimed, "and how well the colour suits Kitty!"

"In a moment the curtains were in service, and Kitty's dark head rose from a mass of graceful folds.

"What are *you* going to be, Addie?" chorus.

"Oh, I'll go as Ceres. I've done it before. All I want for that is a white gown, some grasses and a sickle. I shall do well enough—if I can borrow a sickle! The thing is, what are the rest of us to do?"

Her eyes were on the twins, who, in turn wore an agonised expression. One dollar and two big girls to dress on it. No wonder they groaned.

The College bell clanged. Was it the remembrance of the Greek class awaiting the students that gave Addie the brilliant idea?

"Greek ladies!" she cried. "Let's go and ask the Professor how they dressed."

They caught the Professor on the wing. Of course he was busy, that goes without saying; but equally of course, he was not beyond recall, mentally speaking. In answer to the inquiries, he walked to his bookshelf, and took down several books from his classical library. In some of these were figures exquisitely draped.

"Greek ladies it shall be," cried Addie, as she rushed off to her seat. "Girls, you can have lovely costumes out of your dollar."

The week went by, and we busy girls were more busy than ever. How we arranged our dresses, and got our sewing done seems something of a miracle now it is all over and we look back upon it. Never mind—we were all ready on Hallow-e'en, and met in Loeta's room for a general overhauling by our artiste, Addie.

Loeta, the nun, passed first under the critical eye. Next came Joan of Arc, in a vest, spangled with bits of tin; quite a fine appearance she made, too, on nothing but ingenuity. Addie herself, as Ceres, was perfectly lovely, and could not be mistaken for any one else, as "Ceres" was carefully sewn on her belt in grasses. Loeta's curtains

turned our pretty Kitty into a charming "Portia," and here were the twins transformed into graceful Greek ladies.

"Dear me! what may be done with one dollar, when you possess 'a frugal mind!'" cried Addie, in triumph, turning the Greek maids about. "Let me see:—eighteen yards of cream-cheese cloth at five cents per yard, ninety cents, two masks at five cents apiece, ten cents; sum total, one dollar. No one would believe it who did not have a realising sense that 'necessity is the mother of invention!'"

In point of fact the Greek dresses were considered the most beautiful costumes of the evening. The twins had good figures as well as brains, and had skilfully copied the classical designs. The long folds hung to a nicety, the scarfs were gracefully thrown over the shoulders, and they had brought all their miscellaneous stores of brooches and studs into requisition to fasten the folds over the arm and on the shoulder. For belts they had borrowed some gilt curtain links from a kindly neighbour, which made a very "joyful effect," and the "tout ensemble" was universally voted perfect.

Ceres had borrowed a sickle from the same kind neighbour, so that the party leaving Loeta's room for the Gymnasium Hall of the College felt themselves to be very well caparisoned indeed.

It is not necessary to follow them farther, into the company of Hamlets and others of fame in history and Shakspeare. It is enough if their little difficulties, and the way they got over them, may suggest to other girls that fun can be had without spending a large sum of money on a toilette. For this is what we used to call, as children, a real, true story, and they are all real, hard-working girls, but as fond of fun as any girls I ever knew.

As for the boys, not a bit of mischief was done on Hallow-e'en by any of the College boys; so you see the Masquerade Ball was a success in more ways than one.



## WHO RANG THE BELL?

ONE of the strangest stories I have heard was told me by an aged gentleman who had spent his youth in the provincial city where the event related by him had occurred. I will give the history as he told it to me, only altering the name of the chief actor in the terrible drama and suppressing that of the town. I may add that this suppression is not, in this case, the mere trick of the professional fictionist. The actual name of the criminal and the bare facts of his crime, may be found in any catalogue of famous trials. But the man belonged to a respectable family; a relative of his—in his day a fashionable literateur and popular divine—found it advisable to modify his own cognomen to veil so sad a connection, and it is possible—nay, probable—that some of the line still survive who might be pained by any public returning of this dark page of their record.

Therefore, we will give the family name as Mildon, and their abode as the populous and gay town of X—.

The leading part in the little drama is played by one Charles Mildon, a fashionable young gentleman, mixing in respectable society, of popular manners and many accomplishments, but also, unfortunately, of extravagant and reckless habits and, it seems clear, of those darker shades of vice which frequently underly these.

He lived alone in quiet, genteel lodgings, where it appears that the character he maintained was fairly good. If at times he got into debt, he presently got out of it, owing to the good offices of an old bachelor uncle who had repeatedly come to his rescue; but whose patience, young Mildon felt, was fast wearing out.

This uncle, Mr. Mildon, senior, inhabited a small house in a lively, well-frequented part of the town. He was an elderly man, slightly crippled and otherwise so invalided that he never left the upper flat of his abode, where he was served and attended by a faithful old housekeeper who had been with him for many years. She and her aged master were the sole inhabitants of the dwelling.

There came a time—it was rather late one evening—when people passing by the abode of Mr. Mildon, senior, became aware of signals of distress from the first-floor window. Having succeeded in arresting somebody's attention, the old gentleman, in a very excited manner, proceeded to explain that he felt sure there was something grievously amiss in his lower premises, and to request that assistance should be fetched to his rescue, to enter his house and discover the true state of matters. A curious and eager crowd soon secured the presence of the proper functionaries. They proceeded to break open

the hall-door, thinking, probably, to come upon nothing worse than an inebriate cook or the devastations of a bungling burglar.

But a single glance round the interior changed the aspect of things. Faces grew pale and solemn, and defensive missiles were grasped, the excited crowd was pressed back, and further help summoned.

From mouth to mouth went the grim whisper—"Murder!"

In less than half an hour, it was noised abroad all over X—that a terrible and mysterious tragedy had been enacted in the house of old Mr. Mildon. His housekeeper's dead body had been found just behind the hall-door, and farther up the passage, at the head of the kitchen stairs, lay the corpse of another person, readily identified as a respectable old body who had occasionally visited Mr. Mildon's housekeeper.

It was only to be expected that the old gentleman's nephew was speedily on the scene. The succour of his aged and infirm relative, so awfully left alone, naturally demanded that.

But young Mr. Mildon had also some information to volunteer.

During the afternoon of that day, he had himself visited his uncle. He remembered the exact hour of his arrival, for while awaiting admittance he had casually glanced at the clock in a neighbouring steeple. The housekeeper had opened the door as usual. He had noticed nothing special about her, but then he had noticed little, going straight upstairs to his uncle. With him he had sat chatting for nearly an hour, during which time he had observed no unusual sound in the house. Some sounds, however, he observed, might easily pass unnoticed, owing to the roar of traffic in the street below.

But he had further to narrate that his visit had been brought to a premature conclusion, and he thought this might shed some light on the mystery.

While he and his uncle had been conversing, the door-bell had rung violently. His uncle had wondered who the ringer might be and they had both listened for the opening of the door, or rather for its closing, as it shut heavily, reverberating through the house. They had listened in vain, and young Mr. Mildon had thought he would go downstairs and see if the summons had been attended to. He had gone straight to the street-door, had opened it, only to find nobody! Thinking that the ringer might have retired a few paces, young Mildon said he had stepped out into the street, and looked to the right hand and to the left, but in vain. While he was doing thus the hall-door had suddenly closed behind him, banged as he had then believed by a draught of wind. His hat had been shut within the house, left, in short on a chair in his uncle's room. He had, he said, hesitated for a moment what he should do: he presumed the housekeeper had gone out, marketing, possibly taking advantage of his visit to do so without leaving her master alone: therefore any ringing on his part would be as futile as the runaway ring had been, so he had decided to go quietly, and hatless, to his own lodgings,



which were fortunately not far off, intending to return in the course of the evening, when the housekeeper would have resumed her post. He had actually been on his way back, when the excitement in the street apprised him of the horror which had been enacted in his uncle's house.

Young Mr. Mildon's communication was certainly important. It opened up two or three matters :

Had the housekeeper really been absent from the house at the time of the runaway ring ?

If not, what had been the hindrance to her answering it ?

Young Mr. Mildon was asked why he had not called her, instead of answering the door himself ? Was it because he had thought it likely she was out ? He answered at once that he had not thought about it : the bell had rung and it had been neglected ; he had gone to the door simply as the most direct and natural thing.

Another question was : " Who rang the bell ? "

Was this mysterious runaway the same who subsequently returned and committed the dreadful crime ? Had his heart failed him on the first occasion ? Or had he gained any inkling that the house just then had a stalwart guest as well as its usual feeble and aged occupants ? Mr. Mildon did not see how this could be. He himself had not approached any of the windows during his visit. His uncle had sat in his accustomed chair by the window ; a watcher outside might have observed the old gentleman turn to speak to somebody in the room. But there had certainly been nothing to show that this interlocutor was other than the old servant.

Mr. Mildon, the uncle, confirmed his nephew in every respect. There was young Mildon's hat on the chair, where he had left it. The old gentleman had little to add. After his nephew had left him to attend to the ringing bell, he had heard the street-door slam sharply ; and, looking from the window, had seen his nephew go off, bare headed, and had guessed accurately enough at the apparent state of matters. He had returned to his newspaper-reading, and had not troubled himself further for some time. Then it occurred to him that his housekeeper was late in bringing up his tea and he had rung his bell—had rung it again and again, with as little effect as the runaway ring had produced ! At last he had managed to hobble out of his room and as far as his stair-head, whence, looking over the banister, he had caught a glimpse of the skirts of the prostrate woman behind the hall-door. His only idea had been that his old servant had been seized with a fit, and he had at once given the alarm. From the stair-head it was impossible for him to see the other prostrate figure at the top of the kitchen stairs.

Young Mr. Mildon expressed the liveliest interest in the mysterious ringing of the bell. He seemed to lay great importance on that point.

Another difficulty was presently found attaching to this tragedy :

It was impossible to gain any conclusive idea as to what had been the weapon which had produced such deadly results. In the case of each woman the fatal wound had been a blow on the skull—so direct, so well-aimed and so incisive that it had needed no repetition. But doctors differed as to what instrument was likely to effect its purpose in the peculiar way manifest. It seemed that no clue to the identity of the criminal was likely to come from this direction.

Another moot point was, the possible motive for the crime. Its two victims were respectable old women, little likely to provoke enmity of the violent kind. The motive could scarcely be plunder, for nothing in the house had been removed, or even tampered with. Spoons and other silver table-articles lay on the kitchen dresser, just in the order in which the housekeeper herself had evidently arranged them. Also, there was a large sum of money on the premises, for the elder Mr. Mildon had considerable house property in X—, and as it was just after quarter day his recent receipts had been large, and he had delayed to bank them, a fact which might well have been suspected by many people. This money was kept in an old-fashioned bureau, at the back of Mr. Mildon's room. It was found intact, and the old gentleman himself could testify that there had been no attempt on the part of any stranger to enter his apartment. If anybody had entered the house with this object, why had they not effected it? The crippled invalid upstairs would have been even more easily disposed of than the old women below. One detective suggested that the old gentleman had never left his chair by the window, whence any deed of violence might have been seen by passers-by. But another replied that such a murderer as this would scarcely have been defeated in this way, since a few ingenious sounds on the stair-head would certainly have easily decoyed the old man to the door of the apartment.

"Gentlemen," said the younger Mr. Mildon, "the great question is: Who rang the bell?"

Among the detectives and legal functionaries who met in conclave with the very few "witnesses" who had any testimony to offer, there was one young man who filled such a subordinate place that he had scarcely any right to speak in the councils of his seniors and superiors; and certainly he received very little encouragement when he ventured to suggest that he had his own doubts as to the innocence of young Mr. Mildon himself.

The others scorned him. Had not young Mildon come upon the scene of his own free will and volunteered a statement which set him in the line of suspicion? "He could scarcely help that," murmured he of the doubts; "for, even if his uncle had forgotten or overlooked his visit, his hat would have been found in the house and he would have been called upon to account for it."

It was further urged that the singular absence of apparent motive became, in the case of young Mr. Mildon, an absence of all motive

whatever. He, of all people, was most likely to know of the money his uncle had in the house, and where he kept it; yet he had certainly been in the old gentleman's room, everything there had been at his mercy, and still the invalid was safe and his store intact. To these pleas, the young man, whom we will call Talford, could find no answer; yet he did not say he surrendered his suspicions. He was silenced but not convinced.

Months passed on, and the great crime committed in the little house in X—seemed likely to be relegated to the list of unsolved mysteries. Talford himself had ceased to take any active interest in the matter; and the impression which had once been so strong upon his mind was wearing faint, so that probably, in time, he himself would have grown incredulous of it.

This Mr. Talford had a watch which gave him a good deal of trouble, and at last he took it to a friendly shopkeeper, a skilful mechanic, who, he thought, might cure its aberrations. The man looked at it carefully—said he thought he saw what was wrong—a rather peculiar defect—and proceeded to rummage in a drawer for a tool he needed to remedy it. He did not readily find it, and summoned his wife to his aid. While they were looking for this minor implement, he remarked by the way that he did not see his best hammer either. Talford, who was standing idly by, was aroused by the woman's answer, which came in the form of this enquiry:

"Have you ever had it since you lent it to young Mr. Mildon?"

Her husband thought not, now he came to think of it. Talford struck into the conversation: "What was the hammer like?"

"O, not an ordinary hammer—a watchmaker's hammer—like this," and the shopkeeper produced a tool, which Talford saw at once seemed well adapted to produce those fatal and peculiar wounds which had aroused so much speculation.

"Do you use these tools much!" he asked carelessly.

"Not very much, or I should have missed my best one sooner. I should think it is nearly a year since I lent it to Mr. Mildon."

That signified that it had been in his possession for some time before the murders.

Talford took leave of the friendly shopkeeper and hastened away. His old impression was now as vivid as ever, and he had something more tangible to back it. He was resolved on a bold stroke. He would take counsel with nobody, but would venture a great deal and win or lose all.

He put a pair of handcuffs in his pocket and bade a comrade accompany him on a piece of important business. They wended their way to the street where the younger Mr. Mildon lived in lodgings which he had occupied for a long while. Talford left his comrade to wait on the pavement, and repaired to the house alone.

"Was Mr. Mildon at home?" he asked of the woman who opened the door. Yes, he was at home in his own room. Then the visitor

would go to him there; he need not be announced: when Mr. Mildon saw him he would understand.

Young Mildon rose from his writing-desk on the entrance of his unexpected guest. His face was perfectly unconscious, without either surprise or alarm. For one moment the two men looked at each other in silence. If Talford's conviction wavered, certainly his determination did not.

Laying the "darbies" on the table he said:—

"Mr. Mildon, I am prepared for violence, but you will oblige me if you will quietly produce the watchmaker's hammer with which you murdered your uncle's housekeeper and her friend."

Whether it was the sudden revelation of the discovery of the much-debated weapon, or an idea that Talford would never have acted as he did without some strong evidence to justify him, cannot be explained. But young Mildon, without a word of protest, turned on his heel, went to a chest of drawers, unlocked one, and displayed to Talford the terrible implement. It lay among his handkerchiefs and neckties. He had never even cleaned it. Dry blood was on it, and there were one or two adhering hairs. Yet what seemed such an utter carelessness had come nearer to achieving security than any amount of restless precaution might have done!

The whole of Charles Mildon's original account was proved to be perfectly true.

He had only omitted its most important parts!

It was true that the old housekeeper had admitted him and that she had appeared just as usual.

He had omitted to say that he had instantly felled her to the ground with a blow which needed no repetition. That he had next been startled by the appearance of another old woman, coming up the kitchen stairs, but that his surprise had not unnerved him for the prompt commission of a second murder, which had formed no part of his original plan.

Then he had passed by the two dead women, and gone to his uncle's apartment. He had found the old man seated at the window as usual, but on this he had reckoned, and had laid his plot accordingly. After a little conversation, he had asked for a small money loan. His uncle had so often been complaisant that he had little fear of a rebuff. Had the uncle left the window to take a few sovereigns from his bureau, his nephew would have felled him to the ground and possessed himself of the whole hoard. But to his surprise and discomfiture the old gentleman proved utterly obdurate. Instead of lending the money, he gave him a lecture, loading him with reproaches. The nephew showed a submissive front, wondering all the while, what other dodge he could invent to entice his uncle from his window seat. One occurred to him at last. An anxious and despondent man is often thirsty. He knew his uncle kept divers liquors in a cupboard at the back of the room.

"Well, uncle," he had said sadly, "you can't think how your words upset me—and your severity is such a disappointment to me, I really feel quite faint. You won't give me any more help, you say? I will not ask it. I will ask only for a drink of something—even a glass of water. You will not refuse to give me that?"

"You may take it for yourself," the uncle had declared. "You know where the bottles and glasses are kept. It is part of your abominable idleness that an active young fellow like you should sit there asking a poor old cripple to hand him a drink."

To keep up appearances, young Mildon had gone to the cupboard and helped himself to some beer. Then he had resumed his seat. To wait for his uncle to move, could be, of course, but a question of time, and the stakes he had already risked were too terrible to allow of any impatience. Leaving personal interests aside, he had striven to divert and interest the old gentleman in local gossip and political debate and was flattering himself that he was allaying his uncle's irritation in the most satisfactory manner, when he had been suddenly confounded by a brisk, peremptory ringing of the street-door bell. His uncle had at once vaguely wondered who it was likely to be, coming at that particular hour, when he was seldom disturbed. The nephew had wondered, far less vaguely, what course he had better pursue, since he knew too well that there was no living person below to attend to that bell. Of course, he expected a repetition of the ringing. There had been a sound in the first as if the person producing it would not brook long delay, nor readily give up.

In his desperation, young Mildon caught at his uncle's wonder who it could be, and reiterated it. Then he made a feint of listening, and remarked that the housekeeper did not seem on duty, he would go and attend to the door himself. Accordingly he had rushed away, past the two corpses in the hall, and had opened the door warily, that the caller should not catch a glimpse of the horrible sight within. He had trusted to some dark inspiration of the moment to get quit of the malapropos guest. To his astonishment, nobody stood on the doorstep. Probably this somewhat shook even his iron nerve, for instead of retiring again, with the sufficient explanation of a run-away ring, he had stepped out upon the street to reconnoitre, not however, forgetful to draw the door behind him fairly close. Then it had unaccountably slammed, and retreat, hatless and utterly defeated in his nefarious objects, had been the only course left him. It had at least, given him opportunity to consider his position, and assume the part of an innocent "witness."

Once fairly at bay, under the energetic promptitude of Talford, he dropped his mask for ever. And his subsequent passage to execution was very straight and short.

There is much to reflect on in such a story. Did the door bell ring only in young Mildon's guilty imagination, and was his idea vivid enough, according to some modern theories, to impress his uncle's

mind with a similar idea? A sudden draught will often close a door left slightly ajar. There is nothing unnatural or even unusual in that. Some will be inclined totally to dismiss our telepathic suggestion and to fall back on the simpler one of a mere runaway ring. Admit this, and we have at once, in its time and circumstance, a marvellous coincidence with the needs of the occasion.

And then we have to admit another coincidence in the slamming of the door. Neither that nor the ringing of the bell were in the least remarkable in themselves. They were the most commonplace of occurrences. All their wonder lies in the part they played in this tragedy.

Does not the multiplication of coincidences tend to suggest the existence of a law not fully manifest? A whole philosophy may underly the answer to the question "Who rang the bell?"



#### WHEN MY SHIP COMES HOME.

*Song.*

WHAT will there be when my ship comes home,  
 When my ship comes home in the morning?  
 Top o' the tide o'er the crest of foam,  
 Danger and distance scorning.  
 Oh, there'll be crowns for the lads to spend,  
 And rings for the girls' adorning,  
 And there'll be a gift for every friend—  
 When my ship comes home in the morning!

What will there be when my ship comes home,  
 When my ship comes home at nooning?  
 All the fields where the children roam,  
 Full of the scents of Juning!  
 Oh, there'll be pipes for the boys to play,  
 And bells that the girls set tuning—  
 And cakes and ale as we turn the hay—  
 When my ship comes home at nooning!

What will there be when my ship comes home,  
 When my ship comes home at even?  
 Over the spur of the reef's sharp comb,  
 Under the darkening Heaven!  
 Oh, there'll be a treasure for me, aboard,  
 Won safe through dangers seven;  
 Golden heart of lover and lord—  
 When my ship comes home at even!

G. B. STUART.



*meh*



M. L. GOW.

R. TAYLOR.

THEN SHE ADVANCED WITH THE SKIRTS OF HER NIGHT-ROBE HELD DAINTILY BETWEEN THUMB AND FINGER, AND DANCED ONE FIGURE AFTER ANOTHER WITH HER IMAGINARY PARTNER.